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The
Uses of Literature
in the Pulpit



The Uses of Literature in the Pulpit

by

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"The Stringing of the Bow"

*"Christ's Shining Way: or The
Private Mind of Jesus of Nazareth"*



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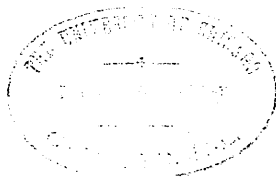
The Uses of
Literature in the Pulpit

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INTRODUCTION: THIS MINISTRY IN THE MODERN WORLD ---

I. "THIS MODERN WORLD"

THERE have been many changes since Homer wrote the Iliad, changes in religion, in science, in geography, and in the people's ways of life. Yet Homer's stories continue to live and his characters still walk among us. Ulysses the wise is here yet, so are Helen the wanton, Hector the chivalrous, Achilles the fighter, Andromache the wife. Men are still good or bad, heroic or craven, approved of conscience or driven by furies. Amid all change, it would seem, human nature, at least, continues to be with us.

"This modern world" may be a new thing in history. Certainly man has not had the radio before and, what amounts to much more, neither has he had the scientific method in pursuing knowledge. I am not sure but that we may sometimes be in danger of forgetting that people sin and suffer, love and hate, hope and despair, yearn for God and sink to hell, just as they always have.

And in this modern world, just as in every other, the preacher's ministry is to them. He has no justification except as he finds that to offer which solves their problems better than anything else is able to do. Though, like human nature, effective preaching may alter its fashions, it manages to retain un-

changed its essential characteristics, and what those are may be considered in any of the outstanding pulpit orators of this or any other age.

Massilon's famous sermon on "The Small Number of the Elect" overwhelmed Louis XIV's dissolute court with horror and dismay. Behind the pews of the royal chapel, with cries of alarm, the guilty worldlings cowered from the terrible eloquence that opened the judgment to their vision and inflicted them with foretastes of the hell for which they had been amply preparing. The whole picture, both in its theology and in the amazing effect of the preaching, seems to us very remote. It is doubtful if many would wish to recover Massilon's theology, but the power of his preaching is more enviable. Presently the abiding and universal elements in his work will prove worth examination, but there is one wide difference between his situation and ours which must be noted first.

The difference lies in the realm of intellectual temper. Massilon's theology is not ours. But neither is the intellectual docility of his audience. In place of the question mark which hovers over every congregation we address, and which calls upon every doctrine we represent to prove its right to be heard, there was an undoubting acceptance of both the message and the messenger as the awful voice of God. Old things, in this respect, have indeed passed away! Massilon's age could never have appreciated Dr. van Dyke's tilt that the heraldic device of the church is a question mark rampant and four bishops dormant.

To deny the change and to intrench oneself behind a reactionary and noisy conservatism, as the way of some is, seems to me to betray a deficiency both in courage and in honesty. Instead of manifesting the vigor worthy of great religious leadership it appears bent on making a virtue out of feebleness and incompetency. "Thou hast rejected knowledge . . . thou shalt be no priest to me." On the other hand, acknowledgment of the change has in too large measure led to a barren liberalism that drones technical truth drearily before congregations like some professors of botany before their yawning classes. Men don't yawn over botany when they talk with a Burbank! His blooms are new, but no man seeing them pines for the old, for they see that these are better. When progressive Christianity moves beyond its class-room bookishness, and out in the windy fields learns to translate itself into *life*, men will not mourn for the old views. But ere that is done more liberal preachers must recover the essentials of vital and imperishable religion in their presentation of the truth they see.

We shall find certain of these essentials in Mas-silon, and, for that matter, in every other preacher whose work has touched a standard worthy to be an example to us.

II. THE PREACHER'S SELF-PREPARATION

But let us not omit to state at the outset that Mas-silon was *personally prepared*. Attention to the sermon, to the topic, to the study, is not enough; a man

must attend to himself also, as the organ and vehicle of his message. The values of social contact, of intellectual discipline, and other fully recognized means of grace, will occur to most of us at once, but I am thinking rather of other values, which, though more neglected, are yet quite fundamental. These are to be found in those all too frequently despised personal instruments upon which the preacher's task depends so largely for its successful execution.

Craftsmanship. What would be the use of your presenting me with a carpenter's bench and his assortment of tools? I have no cunning in carpentering. Untrained and unskillful, the very excellence of saw and chisel and plane in my clumsy hands would make my exhibition the more pathetic, and not a carpenter within sight but would groan inwardly at the sorry spectacle.

Massilon had a voice—and he learned how to use it. He was heir to the French language—and he trained himself to use it. He inherited a physique and he acquired knowledge, but these must have remained only as fine edged steel had he not constrained them to his purposes and made them tools. Questions of voice and gesture, deportment and sentence structure, are not beneath the notice of a man with a mission in life, not when an uncouth bearing can rebuff a soul from God and a barbarous sentence leave religion in contempt. "We cannot all be preachers" is a familiar ministerial confession of laziness. Before any man can claim the right to condone in that easy fashion his being either an excruciation or a bore in

the pulpit he should be prepared to answer how many hours a day he has given to burnishing himself in the preacher's art. Though not all can be Carusos or Paderewskis, all can learn something of music. We see to it that our children do. Not all have it in them to be *chefs* worthy of the expatiations of a Dumas, but there would seem to be no necessity for developing a genius for turning everyone with refinement against perfectly good food by one's manner of serving it!

It is an age of wider education and of more discriminating standards. It is a time calling for "efficiency," and it is a time when ever-increasing skill in entertainment, advertising, and instruction makes more and more conspicuous amateurishness even when it be present in preachers. Dullness is less tolerable than ever, the people run off to their play, or, if spiritual food they must have and still demand, they seek it in an illuminating book or on the air from some preacher who is not dull. Without quite realizing why, people are swifter to feel the preacher's inferior sense of structure and arrangement of material, his deficiencies in art and in elocution. They dislike his provincial-mindedness. Such faults would not be overlooked by movie producers, stage folk, or publishers, nor by any entertainer hoping to keep "his public." We are all attracted or repelled by what we see in men. It may seem trivial and unworthy to be mentioned beside the height of the preacher's noble task for God and man, but the stubborn truth of the matter is that mannerisms, clothes, facial ex-

pressions and tones of voice are all a source of help or of hindrance.

I was twenty-four when I heard the British actor, Oscar Asche, play *Othello*, acting with natural ease, grace, and conviction, without either mouthing or mincing, wholly disarming to any suspicion of his being "trained," and yet, to the reflective observer, not in any smallest part neglectful, haphazard, or unforeseeing. It was a Saturday night, and the next morning I squirmed in misery as the "best preacher in town" perpetrated an artistic atrocity in his pulpit. The contrast between these two men, each eminent in his own place, was too sharp to be lost upon me and I have tried never to forget it.

Considering whom they represent, preachers should appear before men as the very patricians of their race.

The euphony of language can be learned. Unpleasant peculiarities of person can be controlled. Dress can be neat and cared for. Shoes, by remaining chronically neglected, do not thereby become an outward and visible sign of inward spiritual grace. By careful observation, by procuring suitable books, by seeking the advice, if possible, of an elocution master, *and* by considerable attention to his advice when alone, any one of us may moderate some of those many ills of the flesh we are all heir to. This, I am convinced, is something which should be insistently stressed, and the absence of sound drilling in these elements of our craft is altogether too lightly forgiven. Having mastered them, a man forgets

them, or at least remembers them in action as much and as little as the competent singer his rules. But one rising to sing before an audience without reasonable training would be an impertinence; also, the song would not be interpreted. And the song's the thing.

III. SPACIOUSNESS

Spaciousness. Massilon would have died of spiritual strangulation had he been compelled to breathe the air of many of the sermon topics announced in any Saturday newspaper. He always had to get his head up into the sky, where God's everlastings blew their oxygen upon his face. That doesn't mean that his heels ever left the earth. He was a man of vast themes, a great ranger whose field was Divinity, a wrestler with the souls of men under the solemn eyes of Destiny.

A certain fundamental seriousness seems to be necessary in a preacher's makeup if he is to be saved from vocational frivolity, a seriousness that has little to do with superficial facial grimaces, whether of merriment or dolorousness, but which lies in the hidden weave of spirit and mind. How many a sad-looking man has been credited with profundity, while his brother has suffered evil judgment for no other reason than that he was gifted with a sense of the ridiculous. But the seriousness of which I speak is deeper than these accidents, and lies about a person's roots like the nourishing sod that feeds

great trees. Great trees of truth, noble ideas, stately trunk and branch of doctrine, can never come from poor personal soil, from a mind itself so little moved by mightiness that only trifling conception could ever spring therefrom. Some men's habitat and perspective are small not from lack of intellectual training but from deficient spiritual earnestness. Men who think and feel deeply will wish to speak on great subjects, and they will speak on them in a great way.

They will not respect too highly the impatiences of the tabloid age. Every congregation has in it certain good people whose one measurement of a sermon's worth is its length. They can sit out entertainments or bridge parties almost indefinitely, and even lectures are endurable for the first hour, but from time to time they will quote to their minister the rather inane remark once made by a popular preacher—to excuse his own incapacity for major thinking, one suspects—to the effect that “no souls are ever saved after the first twenty minutes.” It is an opinion that simply will not bear looking at, and that it could be approvingly quoted is but another evidence of the prevalence among us of inferior and unreflective mind. The religious instruction which the people need is not to be given in little homilies jealously limited by the watch. For one thing, the people, full of challenge, doubt, and denial, while they desire and demand to know the grounds of religious faith and practice, are also far from being able easily to apprehend instruction when it is of-

ferred. The whole realm of religious philosophy is an unfamiliar one to them. Their minds do not live there. A time of considerable restless, intellectual activity, this is not a time of intellectual profundity. We have indeed acquired much knowledge of many things, but in taking little time to reflect we have lost the *significance* of what we know, and a certain candy-loving frivolity of mind has taken the place of that fine earnestness which gave depth to the "ignorant" farmers of old Drumtochty and old New England. Children have power to ask questions but have not power to receive the answer.

Calling upon the preacher to say *why* he presumes to exult in this fair flower of his faith, and to show that it is not a waxen creation of mere man, too many people nevertheless are not fitted to follow intelligently when he would dig with them to its roots. If he would respond to their great need of something better than genial pulpit moralizing, he will find that "twenty minutes" is not enough, partly because the necessity for explaining, clarifying, illustrating at every step, lest he lose some of his hearers in an unaccustomed realm, lengthens the time, and partly because his topic is bigger anyway. The preacher has a noble and important task to perform in saving his hearers from shallowness and consequent instability in their religious thinking, but it will not be performed if he conceives tabloid themes in a tabloid mind for tabloid minds.

Surely there is a rebuke due for someone somewhere here! Probably it is for the man in the pew

more than for him in the pulpit. Once a week, for at the outside one small hour and a half, the saints and sundry others gather in the house of God seeking, let it be assumed, such spiritual arrest as will more or less balance the preoccupations of all the other one hundred sixty-six and a half hours. The worth of "the pearl of great price" will be estimated by the time occupied in telling about it; "the love song of the ages" will sound the sweeter the briefer; "the fairest among ten thousand" must not detain us from lunch; and the "things men live by" must "make it snappy." As has been observed, in these days "we cry 'Step lively!' to the Eternal." We are of those who would say to a Royal Academy artist showing us his latest picture: "Yes, but condense it, man, condense it!" Should we then have commented upon the picture or upon ourselves? The artist would know. Like Bellerophon, the young preacher sets out to slay the Chimera. Like Bellerophon, his soul is afire with generous vision. Like Bellerophon, he takes his bridle of faith and seeks out the immortal spring where perchance he may capture the winged horse of inspiration. There he meets the old man who used to believe in the winged thing long, long ago when he was young, who thinks he saw the hoofmarks once near that spring, isn't sure, doesn't know what to think about it now. He meets the maiden who confesses to having seen the vision but was frightened by it and ran away. He meets the rosy-mouthed boy whose bright eyes had seen in the water the image of the great white wings in the

sky. But of all whom he meets none is so chilling to his enterprise as the rustic clown who drives *his cow* to drink of this wondrous spring, who remarks with surprise at anyone traveling so far to taste of it, who, utilitarian to the end, thinks a winged horse would be a fool horse, no use in the plow. And when, Bellerophon-like, the young preacher captures Pegasus and soars through heaven bathed in the sun, descends upon the three-headed monster and in desperate battle slays him, not without loss of blood, and at length returns to the Fountain of Pirene, there (coming out of church?) he meets his clod-souled friend again. "I own a cart horse worth three of him," says this fellow. "If this pony were mine, the first thing I should do would be to *clip his wings*."

A cart horse never demands the heavens for his orbit. Space, space only to the mind that would range through eternity. But if the preacher's mind is not to range there, is not to mount where the stars are singing and to that God of whose feet they are the happy carpet; if the preacher's task is not to bring down light and fire for the service of man, what on earth, then, is his task? First let the preacher be earnestly dedicated to that proper task, and disciplined for it, for that task and not a lesser, and then let him demand space in which to fulfil it.

Anyone who would suppose that here is to be found a plea for mere long sermons is being pleased to attempt a smartness. It is a plea for great sub-

jects and a demand for opportunity to deal somewhat with them. "Length" as related to public address is an ambiguous word altogether. I have known ten minutes in every way too long. The substance must justify the time, and the treatment thereof must not seem to make a virtue out of dullness. I am writing for men who would be, not novices, but experts in public speech, and I must assume some ability. I am inviting them to be faithful to the largeness of their message, whatever it should be, and to speak according to it and not according to the shriveled smallness of certain earth-bound hearers.

If it is the encouragement of preëminent example that we want, we have it, for the mighty ones have never been pipers of pretty little homilies, but wrestlers with the master movements of men's souls and the truth of God. This great seriousness may lose for the preacher the lightweights from his congregation, but he will compensate with listeners of character and consequence, and—which also is not to be ignored—he will save himself and his profession from being despised.

Spaciousness of thought first, and then sufficient space in which to speak the thought.

After twenty-one years of editorial supervision of the *London Observer*, Mr. J. L. Garvin was entertained recently by his friends at a luncheon in Stationers' Hall. The *Morning Post* (London) reported Mr. Garvin's opinion of the secret of his success.

Referring to a conversation which he had with Lord Northcliffe, then owner of *The Observer*, twenty-one years ago, Mr. Garvin said that Lord Northcliffe asked him what was the matter with the paper. His reply was that it had no character. Lord Northcliffe retorted, "How would you give it character?"

"I answered," said Mr. Garvin, "I do not know how others would do it. There is one way in which I would attempt it. In this age of tabloid journalism I would revive the long article on serious topics; I would make the views absolutely independent, the news absolutely impartial, and give the public what they don't want.

"I have a complete faith that there is a large and increasing number of thoughtful and earnest people who are better worth appealing to than any other."

IV. INSTINCT FOR THE ESSENTIAL

Solitude. It may be doubted if any man's ideas will be equal to the foregoing standards if they are simply picked up as he runs. "The nurse of full-grown souls is solitude," or, to tax Lowell a little further:

If the chosen soul could never be alone
In deep mid-silence, open-doored to God,
No greatness ever had been thought or done.

The chorus is full here. The seers, who were also the busy workers, of the centuries knew, from old Pythagoras, "In the morning, solitude," to our Emerson, "He who would inspire and lead his race must be defended from traveling with the souls of other men. . . . Plato, Plotinus, Milton, Wordsworth, did not live in a crowd, but descended into it from time to time as benefactors." Massillon was

certainly not chased and harassed and exhausted by the turmoil of the street as we are. We have learned well how to hurrah (alas! also how to "blah!") how to stamp and raise a dust, how to shake the very earth with racket, how to rush off to committees and preaching services, groups and conventions, how to organize and eliminate "waste" (!), how, in short, to shout and slap and rip and roar and be everything under heaven—except be quiet.

Therefore we lose our instinct for the essential. "It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky," begins Ruskin, writing on the subject. "The noblest scenes of the earth can be seen and known but by few." Yes, but how splendid if we have a Ruskin who, seeing them, reveals them unto us, or a preacher who brings light to our blindness by having taken time to behold the face of God! "God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice. They are but the blunt and the low faculties of our nature which can only be addressed through lampblack and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty [in the sky], the deep, and the calm, and the perpetual—that which must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood—things which the angels work out for us daily, and yet vary eternally, which are never wanting, and never repeated, and which are to be found always, yet each one found but once; it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given." And when he says, "If we could examine the concep-

tion formed in the minds of most educated persons when we talk of clouds, it would frequently be found composed of fragments of blue and white reminiscences of the old masters"—I am reminded of second-hand and untrue ideas of religion cluttering up our minds from too much contact with the thoughts of other men. Truth, *truth*, the vital, light-filled, salvation-bringing thing, how much do men who would speak to their fellows need to find it by turning their faces away to the original prospect of nature, whether human or divine? So many travesties abroad, so many curiosities parading under sacred names, so much unctuous falseness, often confident in appeal to "the old masters"! It refreshes me to so much as turn over the titles of some of this critic's chapters—"Of Truth of Tone," "Of Truth of Color," "Of Truth of Space," "Of Truth of Clouds"—truth, truth! I become not as one who would henceforth close his ears to all his fellow men would say—lest something they had seen might be unnoticed by me—but as one who would pause and look for himself.

One never achieves instinct for the essentials in either divinity or humanity unless he learns to be considerably alone. With everyone pulling at him to "Think this!" and "Think that!" with simply endless social claims and claims of "activities" that exhaust, if one is not extremely careful, both the power of reflection and one's inclination for it, it becomes necessary that he who would say a thing of value must watchfully safeguard from clouding, warping,

numbing, or enfeebling the precious, mystic instrument by which the seers see.

V. SENSE OF HUMANITY

Both the craftsmanship by which a man learns the use of tools, and also that practice of stated solitude whereby he retains within himself ability to apprehend truth worthy and large enough to tax his craftsmanship, are within the scope of any earnest man.

If such a man will hold a proper balance between contact with his fellow men and escape from them, until he becomes a man of society and of affairs but not a victim thereof, a man of withdrawals but not a recluse, he will probably strengthen in himself another quality inseparable from all saving ministry to human beings. It is notable in all preachers of redeeming influence, was notable in the French preacher whom we particularly instance.

I refer to the *sense of humanity*. And by a sense of humanity I mean ability to enter understandingly into the feelings of people. There is a "quivering underworld of anguish," there are dark horrors of sin, moanings of failure, mortal pain of stricken hearts. There is the dehumanizing burden of certain types of work, the soul-sapping disease of worry, and the heart sickness of hope deferred. Lack of work, lack of health, lack of money, lack of friends, lack of faith, lack of self-respect—the list could lengthen, and each item on it would carry its own

human pang. In the grand old phrase the ministry was "the cure of souls." The physician of souls must know what is in man, must have felt what he feels, if he is to diagnose and prescribe for man's complaint. A minister may be forgiven for lack of knowledge, he may conceivably be excused for lack of piety, but I think no man will pardon him for lack of human feeling, for inability to know the cause of human laughter and the cause of human tears.

My study is situated at my church and from it I step into the auditorium on Sundays and go to the pulpit. How far do you suppose it is from my study to my pulpit—thirty feet? fifty feet? How far is it from the world of books to the world of flesh and blood? How far? Can you estimate that? One moment I stand before my shelves crowded with themes ancient and modern; the next I face pews thronged with people old and young. From the passionless imperturbability of paper I am suddenly confronted with the tingling, poignant complexity of sentient life, life, life. How far from my books to that? It's a long, long way, an immeasurable way, but God help me if I cannot make the journey, if I have become so "booky" that I can no longer react to and be profoundly moved by the "still, sad music of humanity" met with on Sundays in my congregation!

There before me are young people full of criticism and uncertainty, demanding that I justify before their latest theories the faith that is in me. Their own faith is being impeded by half-knowledge and

inadequate experience, by twisted ideas of religion, and by over-activity of the destructive faculty; but they need me, and respond to them I must if I can. But straightway I perceive coming slowly down the aisle, coming well toward the front, an old woman, and I recognize her. She has not been to church in months, has not dared to venture. The last time she was here her husband was with her; they used always to sit together down there in the third row. I was with her that awful day when they carried him out and laid him among the flowers, and I know what she's feeling now. Though the light died out of her life then, she has hoped much of this return to the house of God. That young man sitting listlessly halfway back has gone morally upon the rocks. Before another week is past, if I don't float him off by a flood tide of spiritual power, he will have torn the timbers off him and sunk in wreckage. Yonder is a man on the verge of another failure in business. Heaven stand by me! His wild eyes turn toward me unseeing, for his thoughts are not here at all, but out in the dreadful world where he is wondering if he will not end the useless fight by violence to himself. If I don't rescue him, who will? What slings and arrows of outrageous fortune have these, my people, met! By what miracle may I minister to all their wide diversities at once? Oh, this maelstrom called life! Truly, truly, bookishness is not enough! If books will help me—and they will—then I must know them; but at least I myself must be as a strong swimmer who has felt the surge and the

storm, and who knows what it is to be down there with men.

"Preaching to the times!" cried Joseph Parker. "He preaches to the times who preaches to broken hearts!"

VI. TRAGEDY; DIVINITY

There are yet two characteristics of Massillon's preaching which must be mentioned here, but only mentioned, for they come under further notice in a later chapter. One is the *tragic note*, so terribly present with him, so abidingly present in life, so largely lost in our modern preachers, to the undoubted reduction of their loyalty to reality and of their efficacy in meeting human problems. There are grim aspects of life which are not to be transcended by being ignored. There are men and women who make desperate choices, who ally themselves with evil, and overwhelm themselves with shame, remorse, and self-contempt. No preaching is great that refuses to take cognizance of life.

And the other is *the sense of divinity*, of the sublime, the awful, the tremendous in God. The Bible and our hymn-books are full of this, yet it is not a distinguishing feature of religion in our time. "Your God is an old man whom you cheat," wrote Ibsen, but we might say, "He is a club man whom we slap on the back. He is a partner who sits in with us on committees." A far cry it is from the easy familiarity, or the business-like bustle, or the careless loung-

ing of much of our bearing before God and that sense of divinity in John of Patmos which caused him to say of the vision, "I fell on my face as one dead!"

"I have not come to tell you what faith is but to help you to believe," said Robert Falconer years ago. Every sermon should be a demonstration in divinity. Greater than to say what God is is to make men conscious of his presence.

LITERATURE'S VALUE IN THE BUILDING OF A PREACHER ---

Literature is human thought and experience consummately stated.

A PREACHER should be a thinker. Literature helps him to think. The preacher should be large in human experience and sympathy. Literature is passionate with these. The preacher should be able to state what he thinks and feels. Literature is the great tutor in the art of statement.

The literary climate in which a man lives profoundly affects him. This is one of the inevitables. The extraordinary effect of the English Bible upon the culture and speech of England is too well known to need illustration, and the acknowledgments made by English orators of their indebtedness to it for their elevation, style, and power are eloquent tribute to what literature can do for the public speaker. There are great literary classics other than the Bible, classics so noble that they cannot be despised, so ready to reward their friends that he cannot be counted truly rich who does not know them. Wherever there are treasures of the human mind, whether from ancient times or modern, there should the speaker to his fellow men find his familiar place.

He who knows literature knows life. But in addition to this he who knows literature becomes definitely strengthened in the essential qualities of great preaching. Let us look at some of them.

I. INSTINCTS OF ART

It is true that preaching should be a passion, a holy one, but, whether consciously or unconsciously, effective preaching is also an art. It is so truly an art that we might ponder how well it fulfills Aristotle's description of art's chief function—catharsis, purification.

Let the man who would enjoy an unusual treatise on preaching read thoughtfully the first volume of *Modern Painters*. With "painting" changed to "preaching," "artist" to "preacher," he would find here all that one needs in the way of a wise, kindling, and in places salutary outline and criticism of the art of public speech, particularly, I think, of preaching.

For example, take Ruskin's description of what constitutes greatness in art: "But I say that the art is greatest, which conveys to the mind of the spectator, by any means whatsoever, the greatest number of the greatest ideas, and I call an idea great in proportion as it is received by a higher faculty of the mind, and as it more fully occupies, and in occupying, exercises and exalts, the faculty by which it is received" (Everyman's edition, p. 11). There are two words in this definition that are worth lifting out for clearer notice. No less than in painting they suggest greatness in preaching. I refer to the words "ideas" and "convey."

Ideas. Thought is more important than expression. No cloud of words, however colorful, can compen-

sate for lack of truth. "The picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and a better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed. No weight, nor mass, nor beauty of execution can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought. Three pen strokes of Raffaele are a greater and a better picture than the most finished work that ever Carlo Dolci polished into inanity" (p. 10). And again (p. 31): "The first five chalk touches bring a head into existence out of nothing. No five touches in the whole course of the work will ever do so much as these." That is because those first touches contain the thought. They limn an angel or a demon, they reveal the painter's intention. Those unadorned chalk touches, with no romantic support, divulge nakedly, almost grimly, the fullness or the emptiness of the painter's mind. After that, what follows on the canvas will only be elaboration, and if this original conception be wrong, elaboration will only give power to its wrongness; if it be right, its rightness will be reinforced. Vital indeed are those "first five chalk touches!" Of vital importance is the thought, the idea—if any!—imbedded in the foundations of a speech or sermon!

Ideas, however, are born chiefly of experience. It is there, in experience, more than anywhere else that one apprehends truth. It is as he seeks to comprehend that which he has felt that real ideas are born, and those ideas, kneaded out of the actual stuff of

life, become the bread of a world. The thing you have felt, whether in joy or in pain, the thing that has been your struggle or your support, which has lived with you and moved you, it is that thing which you may be sure will profoundly move others also. It is that truth in you which will make for mightiness whether you paint or sing or preach, and unless you have it, have experienced it, we may expect that by you no mightiness will be said or done. Turner employed his brush with many landscapes, but it was only as he painted English scenery that his genius really flowered. Ruskin perceived the secret of this: "All great painters, of whatever school, have been great only in their rendering of what they had seen and felt from early childhood. . . . No man ever painted or ever will paint well anything but what he has early and long seen, early and long felt, and early and long loved" (p. 114). In their insistence upon the need of personal experience of religion, the Methodists have rendered a valuable service, not least to those who would preach. But there should be experience of life as well. One should know what is in man. The moan of the world, its temptation, its yearning, its doubt—all that is human—should be known to the preacher.

How enormously a knowledge of literature may contribute to such experience and understanding I will suggest later, but at this point I must show that the truth which is felt and tested in human life must be brought under the examination of thought ere it can be intelligently spoken.

With half-closed eyes, to shut out the extraneous and non-essential, the artist studies the scene, not merely to catch its spirit, its tone, but to achieve its form. General impressions are not enough when it comes to painting. I suppose every preacher may be forgiven if, once in a while, destitute of real ideas, he takes refuge before his congregation in a world of words. Sundays come inexorably, whether the preacher is prepared to speak or not. Not always will his genius kindle, yet speak he must. Then it is that words become a very present help in time of trouble. At the same time, it must be clear to all of us that such barren moments should be absolved only when they come very occasionally. Ordinarily the preacher must be on his guard against the besetting peril of language as a substitute for thought. "The brush is at once the artist's greatest aid and enemy; it enables him to make his power available, but at the same time it undermines his power, and unless it be constantly rejected for the pencil, never can be rightly used" (p. 238). Let us substitute tongue for brush and mind for pencil. Not until your mind has done its careful outlining, its exact portraying, unintrigued to any departure until truth is carefully set down, not until then is it safe for the tongue to begin its eloquence. The broad sweeps of the brush, the noble colors and masses, are very valuable, but not unless they follow the exact precision of the pencil. Emotion, imagination, drama are magnificent only as servants of thought. Preaching is, to say

nothing worse, bad art when the preacher neglects the "pencil."

The first element of greatness in art lies in the realm of ideas.

Convey. This other word in Ruskin's definition states the second necessary quality in art. One must be able to convey thought successfully to his audience.

Your methods may be conventional or they may be original, they may be even erratic and eccentric, but if they are able to communicate your ideas effectively, and if the ideas are real, your methods will be justified yet. There comes a time when the conventional can impede the truth instead of being its vehicle, when the eccentric draws attention to itself more than to the truth it is supposed to enforce, and then in either case the art of conveyance is limping. It is the truth which is master and all methods of telling it are servants.

But there are good servants and bad, and inasmuch as literature supplies endless examples of supreme art, of methods of conveyance that demonstrate highest skill and which have been proved by experience to be effective, it is obvious how much the preacher must derive from living in that realm. Here he will learn to appreciate form in the arrangement of his material. He will not only cultivate a sense of climax, but will grow in discernment of how to achieve it. The Unities will come to have meaning to him, until he grows to be less free with bewilder-

ing subplots and discursions and learns to preserve the focus of his message.

Our sermons are sometimes like Turner's "Crossing the Brook"; they leave our audience at a loss to know precisely at what it is to look. Not all that Turner painted was up to his best, which may console some of us a little. Of the "Crossing the Brook," Ruskin writes: "Incomparable in its tree drawing, it yet leaves us doubtful where we are to look and what we are to feel; it is northern in its color, southern in its foliage, Italy in its details, and England in its sensations, without the grandeur of the one, or the healthiness of the other" (p. 122). Should the eye linger in the foreground on the stream, or with the figures at the side of the stream, or in the distance that speaks of infinity, or in the middle distance where a noble bridge spans the valley? It is all as uncertain as a finely ornamented sermon that is not deficient in eloquence but which lacks in objective. It is unfortunately not always superfluous to remind ourselves that people ought to know what on earth we are driving at.

The first note of *The Iliad*, "Achilles' wrath . . . ," the first note of *The Æneid*, "Arms and the man . . . ," the first note of "Paradise Lost," "Of man's first disobedience . . . ," is the note of the whole. At the outset the eyes are focused and we know the theme. This is not always the method of authors, to state clearly in the first sentences the subject of what is to follow, but whether

in the first sentences or elsewhere the great writers leave us in no doubt of their purpose.

The custom of preaching on a text has this virtue, as has also the giving of one's subject a title. "The Loneliness of Christ" is the name of one of Frederick W. Robertson's great sermons. Then comes his text: John XVI: 31-32—"Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." And then the opening sentence: "There are two kinds of solitude: the first consisting of insulation in space; the other of isolation of the spirit." One is in no uncertainty of the preacher's aim. Even he—strange as it may seem to some of us preachers—appears to be in no doubt. Pellucid of mind, firm of grasp, definite as chalk strokes, no fumbling, he is at his task. Joseph Parker's attack is different, and so is his way of opening up and enforcing his subject. Phillips Brooks and Henry Ward Beecher vary still again. Who would ask that Michelangelo, Raffaele, and Leonardo da Vinci be indistinguishable? But whatever play of personality be allowed, whatever peculiarities in a man's genius may be welcomed as separating him from all others in a fertilizing originality, both for the man of genius and for the rest of us there are but the same rules at last.

I have called to mind the law of unity, the danger of wandering from one's subject or of multiplying plots, and I have indicated the need of focus in suc-

cessfully conveying one's thought to men. But the art of conveyance of ideas must draw other powers to serve it. I now proceed to discuss

II. POWER OF IMAGINATION

It is this that creates drama, that finds romance in the commonplace, sermons in stones, ethics in the dust, that makes a bone suggest a mastodon, a falling apple the law of gravity. Imagination, however, which is only vagrant, without responsibility, is devoid of virtue. Fancy then degenerates into the fantastic. But disciplined by truth and kept faithful to it, it develops into one of the most potent auxiliaries that truth ever has. Ladders of logic become wings of flame, dead things become animated, the dry-as-dust spreads itself as a cloud of glory, from the prosaic syllogism truth "springs upward like a pyramid of fire," color, emotion, revelation all increase by it.

The past generation of preachers knew this power, but it is doubtful if it is in our day the splendor of the pulpit in America, at least. Lucidity, vigor, practicality are rather the distinctions of our best preachers, values much to be sought after by every one of us, yet leaving us bereft of the soaring mightiness of the past if we have only them. A business age is not the one to encourage pulpits to grandeur, to symbolism, to rhythm and mysticism and creative dramatization. After all, we preachers are children of our age. Unless we set ourselves deliberately to

drink at higher fountains we can easily remain mere pulpit types of the business mind and method.

But the age needs more than that—and so does the truth which it is our vocation to expound.

That truth, as has long been claimed, is most lucidly uttered in the person of Jesus. And there, in him, to begin with, is an example of the prodigious access of power accruing to truth when it is able to dramatize itself—this time in personality. "Courage," "goodness," "wisdom," are pallid enough words until they flush into attractive vitality in a man.

But that very story of Jesus itself—who can do much with it if he have not the wit that can see, more than appears at first glance, into the background which gave the foreground birth? What is called the "historical imagination" is part of the indispensable armoury of every successful—I shall not say "story-teller" lest I seem to forget that the preacher deals with the higher realm of realities; I shall say—"historian." No man may write truthfully of Cæsar who cannot visualize for himself the scenes in Gaul through which Cæsar moved and which determined his action. Cæsar is no isolated figure. His words, however plain, are not to be understood alone. There is a setting. The setting not merely invests him with interest, it also helps to expound him. But the setting cannot be rebuilt without the historical imagination.

Furthermore, though we had no descriptions left to us of Cæsar's physical appearance—as we have

none of Jesus'—and though many scenes in his life have been handed down too sketchily for detail, yet the loss may in some part be repaired. The historian, bent on achieving the fullest measure of truth, determined, therefore, not to be thwarted by the available meager facts which rather withhold than divulge the real story, will judge of Cæsar, of his force and bearing, by pondering his influence upon the group or the crowd, will estimate the quality or behavior of the group or the crowd by studying its effect upon Cæsar. This is the legitimate way of all the artists who have tried to place on canvas Cæsar in his triumph, Cæsar receiving the homage of Gaulish chiefs, Cæsar in the Senate, Cæsar assassinated. It is no criticism of such pictures to say that they are "imaginary," that there is no "proof" that those particular people were ever there, no "proof" that they looked, or dressed, or behaved like that if they were, that "for all we know" Cæsar himself appeared very different in actual life. The *truth* of things does not lie in that sort of exactitude—how a toga falls, whether a man's stature was tall or short, his nose straight or crooked.

And yet it might lie there, if the fall of the toga and the height of the man are interpreting a spirit. Artists show not an inventory, nor a fashion study, not even facts. Portraits are not their concern, but likenesses are. No camera ever made could catch some scenes. The verbatim report of a speech is often only a sadly inadequate reflection of it—probably this is so the greater the speech. Artists know this.

They deal in fire and in pain, in cruelty and in courage, in kingliness and in slavery. They choose the features, the poise of the head, the gesture which best interpret the personality they have in hand, a personality attested and borne adequate witness to by no single scene, but by the words and deeds and character of a lifetime. It is no secret that men favorably known to us through their books or public achievements often disappoint us by their appearance and speech when we meet them. Let those inevitable sticklers for "the facts" make the most of the disappointment! With their camera they may precisely fix the mouth, the eyes, the shoulders until every contemporary will confess, "Yes, it is he!" and so may they with righteous confidence hand the result down to future generations, "Behold the man!"

But the artist will contract his brows a little. For just one moment he will bite his lip with mortification at the injustice and the travesty. Then he will set about giving the future the *truth*. After all, a man is usually somewhat other than his physical shape.

The bearing of all this upon our task of interpreting Jesus must be clear. "I have read the New Testament carefully, but I do not find there the Jesus you preach," said a young critic to a preacher who had been pressing the "historical imagination" into his service. The preacher had an impulse to retort with Turner, "Don't you wish you could?"

The recovery of the *scene* has been no novelty in

the pulpit, but very likely we have recovered less than we might of the appearance of the Great Master himself. On guard here again for that distinction between the portrait and the likeness! A portrait of Jesus we shall probably never have. Personally I should offer such a very doubtful welcome. But if we can learn from the classic tracts of literature the art of capturing the spirit and quality of a man, maybe we shall turn the lesson to good account in portraying Jesus. We shall create the sort of figure that breathes his spirit and quality. We shall realize that a man's eyes flash or smile or dream according to—well, according to many things; we shall detect the gleam of sweat on the matted temples as the sharp debate in Jerusalem's sultry street is prolonged, note the contraction of the muscles of the jaw as the strong man seeks to control himself under emotional stress. On the way with the sisters to Lazarus' tomb, on Olivet overlooking the apostate city of the prophets we shall watch him and see much. There is so much to see, and it is all true! You learn to perceive what was not told but what all our experience of life assures us must have been. Thus you cause to live what was at least half dead, by an imagination controlled by facts you pass beyond mere facts, and by many a touch and insight you reveal the brimming reality. Imagination of this kind is simply *vision*.

It will be perceived, however, that I am here treating facts. Pitiful are the results when this Olympianing of imagination controlled and disciplined by the

quality, ceasing its inspired penetration through facts to truth, degenerates into a mere debauch of one's personal sentimentalities. Some preachers make Jesus do and say things which not a line or situation in the New Testament can justify. Imaginative power they have, but it seems to own no responsibility. A woman preacher of our generation comes to my mind, selected here not for her sex, but for her notoriety. To begin with, the Jesus of her mind is apparently that wraith of our modern revivalist meetings, not good, but goody-goody, not love, but lovey-dovey, in all respects up to the standard of the "gospel songs" that have so assiduously wrought to reduce the religious mentality of the masses. With this intellectual content she falls upon the Master where he moves through the immortal pages, and before she is finished with him she has besmeared him from head to foot with the sweet syrup her mind pours out. Fancy? she has abundance of it. She will make Jesus bill and coo and simper, shake with the ridiculous wrath of a schoolboy and utter the wisdom of a nincompoop. She will tell you of "the love light" in his eyes, of his "poor, dear, tired" smile, and all that, and will frequently interject the affecting information: "Oh, I *love* him!" . . . Probably there is a considerable measure of imagination at work here, but the manner of its working rather makes apparent its capacity for becoming mere wanton caprice when, instead of bringing itself into reverence for actuality, that noble faculty renounces restraint, disrelates itself from both history

and feasibility, and becomes little better than an unlicensed orgy of personal emotions.

Real preaching has little sympathy with imagination that is become a phantasmagoria.

In treating of the proper use and value of this faculty we must not fail to speak of that illumination of the common life of man which can follow its employment there. Romance, romance at our very doors to him who can see! The Great Master of parables himself set us an example of the teacher's need to develop and employ this talent. Doubtless it was from Jesus that the picturesque description of his Temptation first came. To have narrated that inner struggle in a few words of prose would have compelled no one's attention; would it not also have somehow missed the truth? The story is told fancifully, with bold strokes that obviously should never be interpreted literally, but how very much is gained by this graphic dramatizing of the passions? Human desire made dramatic, the eternal conflict figuratively externalized, moral victory and moral tragedy rescued from the insipid feebleness and superficiality of the obvious and made realistic with something of the power they actually exercise in life, that has been the way of great literature since first it began to be written. It is equally the way of great preaching.

The supreme tax, of course, is when we come to speak about God. Then if there be any sublimity in us, any religious experience, any power of thought, we shall find all laid under exhausting tribute ere we begin to be adequate to our theme. Philosophy

very properly seeks accurate description of truth, a quest that has not been despised by theology. But religion, the life, the divine life in man, the experience that theology would fain give account of, utters itself more in symbols and in poetry than in definitions. A lively fancy is indispensable to him who would speak for God. Gristle of mind, knowledge, insight, all and more are represented in our best religious symbolism, but it certainly is no accident that it is in symbolism the language of religion continues to be.

Once again a warning should be sounded against metaphors and similes that are not constructed of disciplined thought; they can readily become untrue, sentimental, or in ill taste. Illustrations of this, as already mentioned, may be found in some of our popular hymn-books, not without humiliation to the faith. But a noble symbolism is the last height of eloquence and of revelation. A mere "hut is a symbol of a thought"; it is a higher thought that utters itself in a palace or an Iliad; and "our divinest symbol" is Jesus of Nazareth—"higher has human thought not yet reached."

Symbol is universal in its virtue and tongue. It must be because it is unconfined, it is extensible, like the magic tent, and can widen to the demands of the truth. It is essential to men who, having something to tell and finding no adequate way to tell it, make escape from prose into poetry, from statement into suggestion, and proceed to hint, allegorize, mythologize. Did not Plato at times abandon the frugal suc-

cesses of his prose to carry on the richer exposition of his speculations in illuminating myth? Myth was not used or understood by him, as it popularly is with us, to embody a falsehood but, on the contrary, to expound the truth, truth so overflowing to the poor boundaries of common speech as to necessitate a vehicle allusive, insinulative, unconfined, except by the limits of the thinker's imagination. It is only paucity of conception that can dispense with symbolism. "Imitation," as our critic again points out, "is only of contemptible subjects. It is impossible to imitate anything really great. We can 'paint a cat or a fiddle, so that they look as if we could take them up'; but we cannot imitate the ocean or the Alps." But the preacher's theme is Infinity, Omnipresence, Eternity, Omnipotence, and all the prodigious spaciousness of God! It is love, it is patience, it is mercy—essences of His nature; it is that righteousness and judgment which make the burning pillars of His throne! Who will be sufficient for these things, yes, even though to profoundest thought he is able to add the dazzling splendors of creative fantasy, and in towering image behold Satan as lightning falling from heaven, or an angel standing in the sun? Submit Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven" to literal analysis and it will become ridiculous. Yet as a loyal representation of human experience, of heaven-fleeing, heaven-hunted men, it will not inconceivably continue still to live and breathe and speak when even Kant himself has become an academic curiosity.

To return to lower levels, grace and power in description, one of the orator's highly desirable accomplishments, also may be notably enhanced by observation of the ways of the masters. They vary. Dante gives us precise proportions, measurements, and shape—but what enormous power of conception was necessary to visualize it all! Here, perhaps, is imagination, working through the mathematical mind. But Milton never defined anything. His tremendous effects were achieved by imparting vague impressions. Dante would have given us the exact height of Lucifer, the number of feet or yards across his massy shoulders, the precise extent of his limbs, the weight, length, and thickness of his spear. Not so Milton: "Dilated the devil stood, like Teneriffe or Atlas and on his crest sat horror plumed." As has been pointed out, it is impossible to form any mental picture of "horror plumed," yet the impact of it on us is clear enough. In themes more humble similar diversities of method will be found. "The Cotter's Saturday Night" is particular; so were Gustave Flaubert's descriptions. One has remarked that when Flaubert wrote of the Carthaginian soldiers flogging the slave he saw the whole scene, even to the flying whips knocking pieces of bark from the adjacent plane trees. Roosevelt was notable for exact observation. The antelope in one part of Africa were in all respects the same as their kindred in another part, except that they twitched their tails more. Such a faculty for precision would probably imagine with

precision. Other men may imagine in masses or in general curves and lines. "Hiawatha" affords many instances: "by the shining, big sea water stood the wigwam of Nokomis . . . dark behind it rose the forest, rose the tall and gloomy pine trees."

Of course to separate thus arbitrarily one type from another is to ignore the patent fact that there are few minds of imaginative power which will not at one time or another employ all these types and sometimes may mix them much together. The only contention here is that ability to symbolize truth is preëminently a preacher's necessity, and that, as all literature teaches, the ability also to visualize incident, situation, scenery is no less of vital consequence to him. Homer, prince of picturers, what would he be stripped of his genius for seeing the thing he sets about to tell? How many kinds of wounds was it that he instanced?—not without knowledge of anatomy and even surgery, I take it. He massed the whole world before Troy, cataloguing the chiefs and states—certainly not without some knowledge of the world and its nations. He touched the springs of Hector's heart and saw, down the desolate future, the unhappy wife in tears, not, I judge, without some knowledge of that human heart which beats beneath the bosom of us all. The imagination, at the instant of its opening vans, finds its leaping ground from the solid plain of *knowledge*. But as the body without the spirit is dead, so also is knowledge without imagination.

III. FELICITY OF SPEECH

We are still concerned with the preacher's task of communicating to his hearers the ideas that are his message. It is now time to refer to *felicity* of speech.

From mere facility of utterance the world suffers enough; far be it from me to commit the heartlessness of encouraging it further. Since freedom of speech became a prize to be died for, its privilege has been seized and exercised by all sons and—pardon my gallantry!—daughters of liberty who happen to have sufficient physical energy to get onto their feet. Democratically contemptuous of the graces, and, children of freedom that we are, obviously scorning the restraining tyranny of ideas, at every opportunity and without provocation we present ourselves to defenseless and dejected audiences with the air of that ancient one of whom it is portentously written, "I, Deborah, arose!" Facility, facility of speech—in the mechanical world catalogued as stripped gears, explained pathologically as a species of incontinence, an infliction well known to contemporary history and accounted for by certain theological theories as one of the last plagues told of in Revelation.

No, it is *felicity* that is here our care. Elegance, aptness, strength, music, and all the abundant virtues of fine speaking are in great measure cultivable. To this end the memorization of noble or exquisite pieces of prose or verse, in addition to the elevating pleasure it affords and the useful strengthening of the memory, entices the tongue to run normally into

similar rhythms, fitness, and force. The great orations ought not to be neglected, for they illustrate "how it's done," at the same time offering classic examples which may be learned, not merely learned from, and which then, in carefully isolated pathless woods or on the lonely shore, may be employed in outrageous assault upon the patient galleries of nature. There will be potency enough in some of history's or literature's orations to raise blisters on the bark of any tree, boil the very Arctic into fervor, and cause the sober mountains to skip with the hilarity of young rams. The youthful speaker will wish to write and commit to memory speeches of his own, but let him also give himself the benefit of learning and reciting examples from eloquence in its maturity. Away alone, shaking the wood out of his shoulders—though observing science also in gesture, for there is no virtue in mere violence!—pouring out his soul in passion and invective, kindling nations to revolution and hurling thunderbolts with the gods, he may in fancy create "society where none intrudes" and, let us piously hope, there will be music in his roar! He will train his voice to obedient interpretation of the whole gamut of emotion that his liberated soul has become unafraid to experience. He will learn to use satire and to banter, to employ pathos and irony. The wooing note and the alarum will both become his, and it will be his to heal, to admonish, and to inspire.

And what he thus practices in secret will one day be proclaimed upon the housetops.

There is Chatham's great protest in the House of Lords against the American war: "I cannot, my lords, I will not join in congratulation on misfortune and disgrace," with his skillful adaptation of Shakespeare, "But yesterday, and Britain might have stood against the world: now, none so poor as do her reverence!" From this sonorous strength one may try oneself on such an example of his sarcasm as he afforded when he had to meet in Parliament abusive charges of youthful inexperience and presumption.¹ There is the supercilious scorn of the Irish patriot, Grattan, in reply to Mr. Corry.² No American is unfamiliar with the immortal clarity, simplicity, and elevation of Lincoln nor with the massive energy of Daniel Webster. The United States has been second to none in gifts of eloquence.

It ought to go without saying that any man ambitious for felicity, versatility, and vigor of speech cannot afford to neglect Shakespeare. Rich though Shakespeare undoubtedly is in quotable material, I am nevertheless thinking more particularly of something else. I am thinking of the advantage to be derived from observant study of, say, Mark Anthony's speech over the body of Cæsar. School-trained Brutus, in a polished deliverance that protested honorable and disinterested motives, having successfully roused the mob's antagonism against the slain and all the friends thereof, and having enlisted sympathy for the assassins, Anthony is faced with an almost

¹ See Allusions, 1.

² See Allusions, 2.

impossible task as he takes the rostrum. Then it is we are treated to an exhibition of consummate oratorical skill, from the point of view both of the speech's telling sentences and of its whole development. With the opening "Friends" (when they roar at him), "Romans" (when they roar at him again), "Countrymen, lend me your ears!" our instruction begins. He is carefully tactful. He ventures from delicate compliment into veiled and then obvious sarcasm, "honorable men!" He breaks down with emotion: "My heart is in the coffin there with Cæsar!" He cries out in passionate protest: "Oh, judgment, thou art fled to brutish beasts!" He moves steadily, cautiously, unswervingly toward that desired conversion of the crowd which was his purpose from the first. So he mounts up in confidence to the one terrific, inflammatory word at last, flinging it fiercely out at the climactic moment he sees is ripe, "*would move the stones of Rome to rise and—MUTINY!*" *Mutiny!* that's it.

Great practice all this for the aspiring orator! Yet let me hasten to discourage any too excited hopes that modern congregations just every week are likely to react quite so flatteringly as Rome to Anthony!

The great essayists and novelists have not been mentioned, but it is not necessary. The fine writer, whatever his vehicle, whether drama, essay, or verse, is continually exemplifying qualities and craftsmanship instructive to the public speaker. Inasmuch as even fine writers occasionally fail in taste and droop in force, we may well be both more merciful with

one another and at the same time more watchful of ourselves. Such a fine writer was William Hazlitt. But here is how Mr. Ruskin falls upon him. "Again, look at the large Cuyp [picture] in the Dulwich Gallery, which Mr. Hazlitt considers the 'finest in the world,' and of which he very complimentarily says, 'The tender green of the valleys, the gleaming lake, the purple light of the hills, have an effect like the down on an unripe nectarine!' I ought to have apologized before now, for not having studied sufficiently in Covent Garden [the vegetable market] to be provided with terms of correct and classical criticism. One of my friends begged me to observe, the other day, that Claude was 'pulpy'; another added the yet more gratifying information that he was 'juicy'; and it is now happily discovered that Cuyp is 'downy.' Now I dare say that the sky of this first-rate Cuyp is very like an unripe nectarine: all that I have to say about it is, that it is exceedingly unlike a sky."

Human life is as various as the sea. It is sad as the whispering moan of its undertow along the beach. It is joyous as its dancing waves. Sharks and devilfish are not more gloomy than certain aspects of life, and yet in other aspects it shines as a very mirror of the Everlasting. Mysterious, beautiful, deadly, divine, the very orbs of heaven are necessary to account for the movements of its tide.

This is the preacher's ample and exacting domain. He must meet it in storm and in calm. If he would be not wholly inadequate, he must learn to speak with words that are in proper season and in taste.

There will be times when he will require to shatter with the hammer of Thor, other times when he must plead with the heartbreaking winsomeness of love. He will wield the grand style, Milton's, "*Him the Almighty Power hurl'd headlong. . . .*"¹ He will speak in clarions of war: "*Trumpeter, rally us, up to the height of it!*" and again haunt like a fragrance at evening: "*The tender grace of a day that is dead. . . .*" He will need the stately depth of Thanatopsis: "*So live, that when thy summons comes. . . .*"² He must be able to enter into all suffering, heal with a touch as cool and light as petals of rose, reprove and admonish, interpret hope and dramatize conscience; he must encourage the climber toward the star beyond the hillcrest, kneel by the fallen with discerning and vital words of restoration, hearteningly envisage to the dreamer the gleaming palaces of his dream.

Very versatile must he be who would speak to the moods and needs of his fellow-men and in speaking bring salvation.

IV. REFINEMENT

Therefore he will need, perhaps of all other graces, *refinement of spirit*.

This naturally follows in the case of those who, having refused to live with wolves, have not learned to howl. Royalty stimulates the royal. As time goes

¹ See Allusions, 3.

² See Allusions, 4.

on the mind becomes a mansion for all noble forms, a dwelling-place for all sweet sounds and harmonies, and the banalities, crudities, and even, alas, mountebankisms of which we find preachers here and there apparently unashamed become impossible. Fitness, exquisite judgment, delicate appropriateness in speech and sentiment, are never quite so conspicuously in place as when found in the pulpit.

If ever there is a time when the absence of these is most painfully and inexcusably felt, it is in the time of public prayer. Then it is that the minister should be most human and most divine. All the sorrows, sins, struggles, and hopes of humankind should then be vicariously entered into and understood, that they may be represented to God; but all God's holiness, yearning, compassion, and saving life should be realized that He may be represented to men. Judge whether, engaged in a task so high, any one of us dare claim that his spirit is adequate, or his tongue, either! There are sufferings so dire, wickednesses so appalling, that public words must not touch them—yet somehow they must be uttered. There are moments in the soul so exalted that if the crude clumsiness of speech falls upon them they will lie spoiled like a grasped butterfly. Yet they must not be ignored. Hence the spirit must be taught delicately to apprehend these extremely sensitive phases of human life, else the minister will become like a bull in a china-shop among his people's needs. And the tongue must learn the fine art of indirection, of interpreting without naming, of suiting not merely

words to sense, but the *sound* of the words and the rhythm of them to the mood and feeling. It must learn to say and yet not to say, to touch as light as the finger of God, than which there is also nothing more searching, nothing more healing. The tongue should aim to confine no man's experience by prosaic finality of speech, but by vistas, and the hint of wings, and spaciousness, it should set men free. Can your prayer unlock a repression and not confirm it? Can it dissolve the barriers of dammed-up souls, awaken in men such pure longing and faith that they could weep? And as it thus externalizes what is in man, is it able to make men conscious of the Presence that disturbs and, disturbing, strangely saves?

Much of this, of course, comes with felicity of speech. But, especially in the conduct of public worship, nothing can compensate for lack of true inward refinement. There seems to me to be no doubt that friendly familiarity with the great literature of devotion—I mean the *great* literature of devotion—broad as humanity, haunting with its human feeling and its intimations of God, will inaugurate a new excellence in the mind of him who cultivates it. In this realm the East has its treasures. One glimpse into them will convince the beholder that most of our Western congregations, as they come fussing to church, have conceived poorly enough the meaning of worship. Yet it is in the training of men and women to *worship* that we unite them with the fountains of life. Beyond creed, and with pure spiritual discernment is such a strain as Tagore's *Have*

you not heard his silent steps?—he comes, comes, ever comes. Krishnamurti, too, writes Oriental verse in the true mystic mood.¹ These two men of India are of those modern Easterners who, having traveled and studied abroad, write as those who are familiar with the thought-tones of the Occident also. But behind them is the ancient classic literature of their people, through which God has much to say to the Western minister of religion, if he will hear.

When a preacher of remarkable spiritual power was asked by some young man years ago how he prepared his sermons he replied, almost retorted: "I don't prepare them. *I prepare myself!*" Despite an obvious inadequacy in this reply there is patent also a certain validity.

I have sometimes thought that if we busy men would, on the threshold of our appearance in the pulpit, read in solitude Whittier's "Eternal Goodness," and then, staying our haste to push on to the next theme—for we read so very much, so very widely!—peruse it once more in the posture of prayer and with many meditative pauses—*I bow my forehead in the dust . . . No offering of my own I have . . . Forgive me if too close I lean*—and return yet again to certain parts, until from our little busy world of spurious and noisy impertinences we are escaped, and the realities are ours, and with the realities the great emotions of the soul and the great insights: I say, I have sometimes thought that if we busy men would take the time to do that then our

¹ See Allusions, 5.

people might more often see in us, as we stand before them, something of the illumination which men beheld as they looked on the face of Stephen gazing into heaven.

Allusions, 1

WHEN his aged and angry abuser sat down, young William Pitt, as he then was, rose with:

"The atrocious crime of being a young man, which the honourable gentleman has, with such spirit and decency, charged upon me, I shall neither attempt to palliate nor deny; but content myself with wishing, that I may be one of those whose follies may cease with their youth, and not of those who continue ignorant in spite of age and experience."—(BELL'S *Modern Reader*, p. 267.)

Allusions, 2

"HAS the gentleman done? Has he completely done? He was unparliamentary from the beginning to the end of his speech. There was scarcely a word he uttered that was not a violation of the privileges of the House; but I did not call him to order—Why? because the limited talents of some men render it impossible for them to be severe without being unparliamentary. But, before I sit down, I shall show him how to be severe, and parliamentary, at the same time."—(BELL'S *Modern Reader*, p. 289.)

Allusions, 3

HIM the Almighty Power
Hurl'd headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous ruin and combustion, down

To bottomless perdition; there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms.

—*Paradise Lost*, p. 3.

Allusions, 4

So LIVE, that when thy summons comes to join
The innumerable caravan that moves
To the pale realms of shade, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,
Thou go not, like the quarry-slave at night,
Scourged to his dungeon, but sustained and soothed
By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave
Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him and lies down—to pleasant dreams.

—BRYANT'S *Thanatopsis*.

Allusions, 5

BUT yesterday
I longed to withdraw
From the aching world
Into some secluded mountain spot,
Untrammelled,
Free,
Away from all things,
In search of Thee.
And now Thou hast appeared
Unto me.

I carry Thee in my heart.
Look where I may, Thou art there,
Calm, happy,

Filling my world—
The embodiment of Truth.

.
He walked towards me and I stood still.
My heart and soul gathered strength.
The trees and birds listened with unexpected silence.
There was thunder in the skies—
Then, utter peace.

I saw Him look at me,
And my vision became vast.
My eyes saw and my mind understood.
My heart embraced all things,
For a new love was born unto me.

A new glory thrilled my being,
For He walked before me, and I followed, my head high.

—KRISHNAMURTI. *The Immortal Friend*,
published by Horace Liveright, Inc.

ITS EMPLOYMENT IN THE ILLUSTRATION OF HIS MESSAGE_____

I. IN GENERAL

WE HAVE said that literature is human thought and experience consummately stated.

It follows that literature contains illustrations of all about which one could possibly preach. As one reads he should train himself to see material that might be useful, probably he should mark it that it may more readily be found again. The supply is endless and fascinating.

Illustration and enforcement are sometimes by direct quotation, at other times by methods instanced below. Some writers are more quotable than others, more suggestive. What a devastating comment Carlyle drops on the dead body of Mademoiselle du Barry, empty-headed, empty-souled, frivolous, flapperish sorceress of Louis XV's court, type of pretty, feminine vacuity always, type of so much in our own day that exasperates and confounds even our scorn: "Oh, unclean, yet unmalignant, not unpitiable thing, what a course was thine: from that first truckle-bed (in Joan of Arc's country) where thy mother bore thee . . . forward, through lowest subterranean depths, and over highest sunlit heights, of harlotdom and rascaldom—to the guillotine axe, which shears away thy vainly whimpering head! Rest there uncursed; only buried and abolished: what else befitted

thee?" And when the dying Louis, alarmed, after having considered only selfish purposes in this world, would scramble at this last moment to safeguard his interests in the next, and calls for a priest, Carlyle remarks: "For His Majesty has religious faith; belief, at least, in a devil." Small value, "he vanished utterly, leaving only a smell of sulphur!"

Or to change the thought, are there none in our pews who might realize themselves at least understood by the preacher if they heard him reciting the agonies of "The Everlasting No"? "In the midst of their crowded streets and assemblages, I walked solitary; and (except as it was my own heart, not another's, that I kept devouring) savage also, as the tiger in his jungle. Some comfort it would have been, could I, like a Faust, have fancied myself tempted and tormented of the Devil. . . . but in our age of Down-pulling and Disbelief, the very Devil has been pulled down, you cannot so much as believe in a Devil. . . . Having no hope, neither had I any definite fear, were it of Man or of Devil: nay, I often felt as if it might be solacing, could the Arch-Devil himself, though in Tartarean terrors, but rise to me, that I might tell him a little of my mind." Such hearers, confident now that their world is not closed to a preacher who can describe it with such sympathy, will be the more accessible to that bracing master note to which all loyal souls must come at last, and from which, no, neither by doubts nor by any other plea, can there ever be absolving: "Thus had the *Everlasting No* pealed authoritatively through all

the recesses of my Being, of my *Me* . . . 'Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's)'; to which my whole *Me* now made answer: 'I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!' " With genuine insight it is added, "It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth . . . ; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a Man."

So may one revel in the usability of Carlyle and of unnumbered others. Since very early days in my preaching experience certain noble sentences of Emerson's, committed to memory, have tramped with me through the years to admonish, reprove, and, from their height, to beckon: "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after one's own. But the great man is he who, in the midst of the crowd, keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude."

G. K. Chesterton is usually fruitful to the preacher. Mr. Walter Lippmann can see, with all "high religion," that there is no escape from the ascetic principle to him who would live well, and that our popular attempts to despise restraint and self-schooling are based on a fearful mistake. But twenty years ago Mr. Chesterton even more picturesquely pointed out that all our fairy tales depend upon an "if"—you may inhabit the palace *if* you don't say "cow," and you will live happily with the king's daughter *if* you don't show her an onion. The command is always a necessary part of the happiness; Cinderella must leave before midnight. You will

preach to many a young man who will need to be told that *if* only he will cease his whining about his unfortunate heredity, environment, or inferiority complex and, like a man, put the defiant trumpet to his lips, at the brave blast the ogre's castle will fall.

To anyone who has read Lewis Mumford's *Herman Melville*, if he did not sense the truth before, *Moby Dick* will have become very much more than a fine sea story. Mr. Mumford goes so far as to claim that it is one of the most remarkable allegories since Dante: "no other fable, except perhaps Dante's, demands that we open so many doors and turn so many secret keys; for, finally, *Moby Dick* is a labyrinth, and that labyrinth is the universe." The story, however, is already rich without this profounder meaning. Its eloquence frequently rises to the height of blank verse, surely one of the most gorgeously written pieces of prose we have. It scintillates with phrases and passages that haunt the memory. "Oh! how valiantly I seek to drive out of others' hearts what's clinched so fast in mine!" Reminding of Bunyan's: "I went in chains to preach to those in chains," a sentiment to which no true preacher will fail to answer. When men rebel in moral grievance against the universe and yet are consciously puny before it, and the sublime sense of right bears up impotently, yet unyieldingly, then is the eternal superiority of justice over brute force illustrated in Ahab's speech: "I own thy speechless, placeless power; said I not so? Thou canst blind; but I can then grope. Thou canst consume; but I can then be

ashes." It is in the mood of Milton's reply to the threat of the tyrant soldier, "And I have power to be killed and scorn ye."

This prodigious authority that dwells in a man's sense of right (as Thucydides makes the Athenian envoys tell the Lacedæmonians: "Men's indignation, it seems, is more excited by legal wrong than by violent wrong") seems to be overlooked by those who would prove divinity by an appeal to miracles, as if all the miracles in the world could make Christ our Master if in his own moral and religious right he were not so. It is the same with that representation of the Second Advent which portrays Christ descending from heaven at last to silence opposition, overturn evil, and set up his own kingdom by irresistible power. Have the advocates of such a doctrine never pondered the futility of it? If Christ has no other means of conquering, what can he hope to achieve by this means? He may consume, but we can still be ashes and in our final thought can still be protestant and unsubdued. There is more hope of the world's salvation in Starbuck's reflection as he leans over the ship's rail and contemplates the ocean, peering "deep down" beyond the superficial clamor of circumstance, into the pure and hopeful spirit: "Loveliness, unfathomable, as ever lover saw in his young bride's eye!—Tell me not of thy teeth-tiered sharks, and thy kidnapping cannibal ways. Let faith oust facts; let fancy oust memory; I look deep down and do believe." Yes, there is substance in *Moby Dick*. Does a church need to be warned against com-

promise with wrong? "Woe to him who seeks to pour oil upon the waters when God has brewed them into a gale! Woe to him who seeks to please rather than to appall! Woe to him whose good name is more to him than goodness! Woe to him who, in this world, courts not dishonor!" But if there be some courageous fool who will not estimate the strength of the enemy, then, "'I will have no man in my boat,' said Starbuck, 'who is not afraid of a whale.'"

Of course there is no end to this. But one more instance, if only for the sheer joy of telling it. Wherever preachers would inspire themselves and others with the way of pilgrim souls, and see again the cost and the high bravery of all lone adventurers over uncharted seas to new worlds, let them turn again to Lowell's *Columbus*.¹ There they will read their own story if they have been loyal to the thing they have sensed, and they will brace themselves to quell blind and selfish mutiny, persevering onward alone with God.

II. REGARD YOUR AUDIENCE

Audiences vary, so that an illustration which would be telling with one would be wasted on another. During the war I found that, in addressing soldiers, I might quote Kipling with effect, but not Wordsworth. Not all are ready for the more reflective verse, nor for the more delicately tinted, such as Shelley's, and not all can appreciate metaphors

¹ See Allusions, I.

and figures that are not immediately obvious or that do not deal with the world of action. "Until an envious wind crept by like an unwelcome thought," describing a breeze darkening the mirror surface of a forest pool, is likely to appeal only to a limited number, but Hector's vigorous, "My heart weeps blood at what the Trojans say!" or the Bible's, "like a bear robbed of her whelps," or Tennyson's "Ulysses," "I will drink life to the lees," will be lost on none. One is never quite so safe with a strange audience, and between an audience of men and an audience of women there is also considerable difference. Achilles' eyes flashed at sight of the sword, but the maidens concerned themselves with mirrors and beads.

III. ILLUSTRATIONS SHOULD ILLUSTRATE

Having an eye to your kind of audience will not alter the desirability of seeing to it that when you set out to illustrate, you illustrate. A window should let in light; it is not enough that it draw attention to itself. I remember hearing an evangelist, on the closing night of his revival meetings, pressing upon the unconverted the desperate urgency and peril to their souls of these last moments. To impress them with how loath he was to close the meeting lest some of them should thereafter never be so near the kingdom again but, dying in their sins, be lost, he told of a soldier in the American Civil War who had his

arm blown off. The doctor thrust his hand into the arm socket, grasped the end of the truncated artery, felt it filling and pushing at his finger and thumb, yet held on with all the strength he had. As the wounded man opened his eyes, the doctor said, "The moment I release my hold you'll be in eternity!" A few more moments and the doctor's strength gave out. The artery slipped from the exhausted grip and the man was dead. "And in these last moments I am holding on to the pulse of your soul," cried the evangelist, tragically. "I dread to let go, for that means death to some of you!"

Now of this "illustration," which was wholly overloaded with lurid detail, two things must be said. One is that the bloody and gruesome thing drew so much shuddering attention to itself that very little was left for the point the speaker was trying to make. All over-harrowing stories do that. As a boy I used to hear a fervent preacher whose ardor led him into very graphic descriptions. It was not enough for him to say that the boat from the wreck was already so full that its occupants had to thrust back into the water those who struggled, clutching to draw themselves aboard. He always felt divinely inspired to picture some one grabbing an ax and chopping off the fingers that clung to the gunwale. He would have us all sanguinely bespattered before he got through, and the writhing shapes he would have us witness slowly sinking in those encrimsoned waves were enough to be remembered through years.

But why on earth he was talking about those terrible things I've no recollection of ever having known. I couldn't get past the blood and agony. It's a bad illustration that leaves the attention upon itself.

The other thing to be said is that, anyhow, it did not illustrate. What *was* that evangelist getting at? Did he really mean to show that he was like a doctor holding a severed artery and that when he let go somebody would be lost? Highly, very highly doubtful doctrine, to say the least, and some would say presumptuous and absurd. But even if it were true that the termination of those meetings would terminate also some man's hope of salvation, we still would seek in vain for parallels between the evangelist's story and the condition of an unconverted man. A little while before the soldier was in perfect health. Was the "sinner"? The soldier was suddenly stricken—a tragedy. But who struck the "sinner"? The Spirit of God? Then a blessing, not a tragedy. There's life and hope, not death, in conviction of sin. The soldier's peril was the fruit of duty undertaken. The "sinner's"? The doctor holding the bloodvessel, certain to relinquish his grip, had no word of promise to offer, only a pronouncement of inevitable doom, and the soldier had nothing he could do to be saved. Did the evangelist mean that all this applied to the "sinner"? In short, the story, in addition to retaining attention to itself, failed to illustrate anything—unless it were the idea of urgency and, perhaps, the offensive taste of the speaker.

IV. VARIETY OF TYPES

It is natural that a preacher should be able to use certain kinds of literature with more ease than others, but he should not allow this to confine him. The heart has many strings; he should aspire to touch them all. People are variously impressed. When Hector lay hold of and shook the Grecian gates in vain, he changed his tactics and hurled a rock at them. Then he got through. That the preacher should be preëminently strong and at ease in one line should be no ground for his being wholly futile in every other. Let him know that versatility will strengthen every part, and that even the things he can do best will gain in both charm and power by being offset by contrast. Without discriminating too arbitrarily, or forgetting that one's uses of literature doubtless blend within them a number of the following distinctions, let me nevertheless make them.

The shooting contest

Illustrating analogically. A fine example of this way of using literature is afforded by Mr. Fred Lewis Pattee in his *Tradition and Jazz*. He is criticizing writers. He wishes to show that even superlative cleverness, though it might likely enough produce a "best seller," is never sufficient to make classic writing. So he recalls the archery contest at the funeral games of Anchises, as told by Virgil, and the setting up of the mast-target with the bird tethered to its top. The first archer strikes the center of the mast, a bull's eye, perfect shot, and the crowd raises a yell.

The second, not seeking to eclipse perfection, severs the slender chain that binds the bird, which thereupon leaps into the sky. The third follows the bird with his aim and, loosing his shaft, brings the fluttering thing down from the clouds, dead. With no target left, the fourth turns his arrow to the open heavens, into which it flies with such velocity that it bursts into flames. The crowd sits silent, puzzled. But Æneas awards the prize to the last shooter.

With this interesting material Mr. Pattee does some equally interesting things. Those modern writers, "realists," "stark-nakedists," who "tell the facts"—"By God! I told them the Truth!"—are like that first marksman who hit the bull's-eye with unsurpassable skill and got the popular cheer, but missed the prize. With all his skill his was only an earth-rooted target, owning no relation to the skies.

Then we have the sensationalist, the writer who provides us with the unexpected, who cuts the hidden chain so that we all gasp. Very spectacular, yet not of the immortals. After him follows the class that does indeed get some glimpse of the skies, and to that extent is higher in the scale, but which bends its bow to the bringing down of the high-flying thing, lifeless: "See, this is all it is!"—Mark Twain who shoots down the fine old life of Europe, Cervantes who "smiles Spain's chivalry away." But there are a few who turn their backs upon the crowd and shoot for the gods alone. Their arrow makes a flaming pathway across the skies, but *that* shot is usually

received in silence by the crowd which never can understand it.

The power and value of this sort of work needs no emphasis. A chapter of unenlivened prose can speedily be forgotten, but who can fail to carry away the points when they are made as graphic and entertaining as here?

The *Idylls of the King* lend themselves readily to uses of similar kind. King Arthur continually suggests that higher King of whom preachers hold themselves the ambassadors. Maeterlinck's *The Blue Bird* affords picturesque substance for a whole series of sermons. Alfred Noyes is another case. His *Enceladus* personifies in the giant the long, slow emergence of personality from the crude cave, the futile attempt to satisfy it by fleshly indulgence, and the ultimate realization that for personality there can be satisfaction only by a higher way. One grows quick to see possibilities in what one reads.

The Minor Key. Some preaching is as brilliant but as hard as a diamond.

If the sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought, it is partly because beauty and pathos seem inevitably to suggest each other. Greatest pain is always somewhere in the neighborhood of love, our holiest, dearest, divinest passion. Our fondest dreaming and the wistful ache of life no man may put asunder.

The undertones are the most haunting. Suffering is universal and it is always up-to-date.

The problem of suffering and the problem of

evil will often press upon the thoughtful preacher. He will reflect upon them more than do his people, for most people realize such problems only when they themselves are personally pinched by life's shoe. But they must occasionally be instructed and fortified against such a time, seeing that it will surely come. Like young Prince Siddartha¹ they will experience the shock of discovery, but unlike him they may be by no means sufficient unto that day without maturer help. In depicting for the unimaginative and inexperienced those hard conditions which we all must learn to face and from the dehumanizing power of which he has relief to offer, the preacher will find ample help from all those imperishable pages whereon thoughtful and sentient men have written the agony, the complaint, and the heroism of our race.

With so much trouble already in life, it is a wickedness for any preacher to touch any hurt merely that he may harass. Moreover, with his vocation and opportunity so high it is a shame for him to become only mawkish in the hour of sentiment and sympathy. Attention to the manner of great literature is likely to save him from both, for there is a deep-bedded greatness in suffering when it is met with fortitude, and the pain-prompted thoughts and pictures left us by writers are usually among their sublimest. Victor Hugo's chapters on the Bishop in *Les Misérables* afford many illustrations of what I say, while one of the noblest passages in Homer,

¹ See Allusions, 2.

Hector and Andromache on the walls of Troy, is freighted heavily with that anxiety, love, and yearning by which so much of life's pathos is caused.¹ *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush* (Ian Maclaren) is incomparable in its place, and the minister who could live in its spirit, its humor, and its tenderness, would be a very healing balm among his people. He who would preach on the Prodigal Son should certainly first read the chapters on Lachlan Campbell, and who knows but he will find there not alone a profounder understanding of many things but also certain moving and serviceable illustrations of the ways of God with men.

The Dramatic Style. Conflict is one of the major facts of life, conflict between right and wrong in every man's heart, and in the outer world of affairs.

The mind of man is committed to the rationalization of the extremely ancient power of instinct and passion, a power so much older than the human mind, so confirmed, confident, and potent that there is not a man among us who does not find a law in his members that, "when he would do good, evil is present with him." That is, when he would honor and give place to the civilizing thing within him, the wild reactionary vigor of primitive powers is terribly to be reckoned with, so that too frequently the higher thing that he would do he does not. There is a sense, therefore, in which man is the grand battleground of two empires, and the preacher who would effectively describe that battle will need all his

¹ See Allusions, 3.

dramatic and heroic sense. Such is the part that moral courage, for instance, plays in the building of character that Dr. L. P. Jacks seems prepared to resolve all ethics at last into it, and speaks of the "unconverted or unheroic mind."

And this vast expostulation "'twixt old systems and the Word" only gains in vigor as we pass from the personal domain to meet it in the wider world of affairs, where the prophet bears up against institutions perhaps as old as man, but which, by the increasing moral sensitiveness of the highest souls, are marked for death. A few lonely peaks may burn, but long will be the travail and many the lives laid down ere the promise is fulfilled through all the valleys and it is day. We ourselves are living in a time of such struggle.

Here, then, the preacher may lay all the great dramatists under tribute, whether they be creators of plays or of romance, and also those Old World stories that have been loved and retold through centuries will be used yet again to inspire men to noble deeds. Plutarch, having done much for Shakespeare, lives still, that he may give stirring incidents and pithy sentences to preachers. The controversy in the pass of Thermopylæ was not against greater odds than the controversy which rises in the soul between any man and the barbarian. And all that is worth living for hangs upon that argument! How inglorious it is to grasp at life, resigning the nobler strife and tolerating defeat, is illustrated in that ancient hounding of the sole survivor of Thermopylæ from

his native village as unfit to live. But on the contrary, "Go, stranger, tell the Lacedæmonians that we lie here obeying her laws"—so ran the proud epitaph above the gallant band that preferred to be faithful unto death! There is a thrill in the old story yet, and also a fit parallel of some things as we know them. Many are the saints and prophets who have disputed unto the very end in the name of higher laws than those of Sparta, enduring all the sternness of the issue. And they lie in glory.

Drake (Alfred Noyes) is full of situations. Is any wit so slow that it can see no analogy between some exigencies we preachers describe and Drake's "six little ships, no more"—in the gray fog beating up against adverse wind out of Plymouth Sound, tackling now to this side, wearing now to that, gaining only by laborious inches, through the night, going grimly in the name of England to meet the Invincible Armada that was coming on the same wind that pressed Drake back, winning at last the open sea, steering straight for the enemy, the mist hiding from them all heartening knowledge of following support, "six little ships, no more"? But neither forgotten nor forsaken, for England's captains were coming behind them through the mist. "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha."

I remember the enormous effect with which Henry V was quoted during the Great War by an orator

seeking recruits for the volunteer Australian army. The theater was crowded in one of the suburbs of Melbourne in 1916, and those were the days of passionate idealism. We believed we were sacrificing to save the world, in those days. It was by no means a light or frivolous matter to summon men to enlist, certainly not at that juncture. Things were bad at the front. Men were realizing that to leave business, home, family, and comfort on such an adventure was fraught with the grimmest possibilities. Yet in defense of the nation, in defense, as they saw it, of the world's rights and liberties, many had gone and others must go. Patriotic feeling was high, heroic challenge was in the air. . . . The speaker had been telling of the need in France, of the battered, weakened divisions calling for reinforcements, and then he capped his appeal by reminding his audience of the eve of Agincourt, of King Henry, captain of a hungry and ragged English army, outnumbered, outfled, outharnessed, about to meet the princely strength of France and replying scornfully to Westmoreland's wish for more men from England. No, they in England had left the campaign to these and these would do without them. The audience followed the orator through the long years after the war when those who had been at the front would be aristocrats indeed with a memory too proud to be let die, and as he broke into Henry's speech they realized the parallel. Enthusiasm could hardly wait. They rose into wildest cheering as he reached the climax: "And

gentlemen in England now abed will think themselves accursed they were not here.”¹

That “war to end war,” I take it, is, so far as Christ’s preachers are concerned, anyway, still on. There is no armistice and we have signed no articles of peace. “We are bought with a price,” the blood of millions; we are committed to a vow and to an implacable hostility. We have learned the cynical ease with which governments solemnly mislead in order to gain their ends, suppress truth, breed falsehood, manipulate to base uses even the idealism of men, promise all things, and then, when the storm is over, forsake those who had trusted them. But we are not, we hope, quite as naïve as we were. We even suspect we are come to the kingdom for such a time as this! States know that the memory of man is short. Preachers must see to it that though the years wear on, and though that revealing Tragedy falls farther and farther back, *the people shall not forget!* Amid the agonizing memories of Armistice night, 1918, a man of our calling, one who was with the troops in France, walked alone in the darkness, cried out to the fallen whose faces peopled the night—and to the women and children for whom life could never be the same—cried out in grief, in bitterness and protest: *If I forget thee, may my right hand forget her cunning! If I do not remember thee, may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth!* Is not such a pledge in the spirit of every minister of Christ, and

¹ See Allusions, 4.

does lengthening time make any difference, and has God absolved any one of us from it?

But is any preacher so ingenuous as to suppose he can be loyal today and tomorrow to that vision and suffer no penalty? Let him try!

With such a task on his hands, with bitter passions of race and of class to meet, social evils to combat, and certain irreconcilably pagan features of our economic system to challenge, he will need all his powers. Not least he will need to resort to the pages of dramatic literature as a warrior does to his armory. He will require also, of course, to fit himself in the use of his weapons, and to some this will not come so easily as to others. All great things are difficult, Socrates tells us. "But," he adds, "the reward is great."

The Grand Style is, I suppose, no more than a heightening of the foregoing, but has elements of sublimity that perhaps the other need not have. It is kindled less by *mêlée* upon earth and more by the war of "principalities and powers in high places." The preacher's theme is often tremendous, with its field spreading out into eternities, and its antagonists the awful altercation of mysterious supra-human principles. Commonplace language is, then, not merely inadequate, it is banal. To describe the fall and loss of a soul in ordinary terms is to leave the event ordinary. To speak of love, of death, of virtue justly is to speak of them sublimely, but how may this be done by one whose sentences were never touched with *grandeur*?

It hardly needs to be said that for speakers of the English tongue Milton is supremely the exponent of the grand style. Your *Paradise Lost*, not merely are great principles dramatized there for you, characterized, and shown in terrific encounter, but, like dells and fertile crevices on the majestic slope of the mountain, there abound such lesser materials as the preacher loves.

The disguised Satan, plotting mischief as he squats on the confines of Eden, when touched by Ithuriel's spear springs to his feet revealed in his true character: "For no falsehood can endure touch of celestial temper, but returns of force to its own likeness: up he starts, discovered and surprised." But the Church of Christ should be in this world as the spear of Ithuriel, exposing by its own heavenliness whatever is contrary. Abdiel, though standing in the very midst of all the Satanic powers, rejects the blandishments of Satan, and, with stately stride, down the long, black, jeering ranks, goes his way: "And with retorted scorn, his back he turned on those proud towers to swift destruction doomed." What insights are revealed in the combat between Satan and Michael. Once Satan was second to none beside the Eternal Throne, known then as Lucifer, Son of the Morning (alas! our forfeited names!). Now he meets Michael, who, with his hosts, in the battle about to begin, will divulge a secret virtue that has gone out of their opponents—"Not to have sinn'd, not to have disobey'd, in fight they stood unwearied." But first the mighty leaders, "two broad suns their

shields," rushed upon each other like "two planets" meeting, their "fiery swords" making in the air "horrid circles" as each, with an arm next only to Omnipotence, sought with one stroke, that would need no repetition, to make an end. "But the sword of Michael, *from the armoury of God* . . . neither keen nor solid might resist that edge," it bit deep into the fallen archangel's side. "Then Satan first knew pain." They carried him behind the lines. "There they laid him, gnashing for anguish, and despite, and shame, to find himself *not matchless*." As I say, what insights! But insights tremendously stated. That picture of the Fallen One standing among his angels, what a lesson in majestic effect!—"He, above the rest in shape and gesture proudly eminent, stood like a tower."

The preacher who would fain expand in the grand style, making it one of his powers ready for employment when the thought and moment should summon it, would do well to commit to memory and audibly recite suitable and resounding passages—as those thirteen lines in the sixth book of the *Paradise*, beginning: "He on his impious foes right onward drove gloomy as night." There are many others. This would be use of the grand style by direct quotation. It would help to develop independent ability of the same kind, and having begun to achieve that, the preacher would find within his reach many stately themes where only the prepared may walk. He would take great conceptions and yield them gloriously because he had made himself able.

Grandeur and sublimity, however assuredly they gain from adequate expression, are of course dependent first and essentially upon conception. Massive speech that is freighted with only a trivial idea is intolerable. It therefore is worth noting that even where there are deficiencies in style there may still be grandeur and sublimity if the thought involves them. The thought, the thought's the thing. Denied competent speech, it is as a deity that is unable to become incarnate. Clothed in Miltonic splendor, the very glory of God shines in the face of it and we are transformed into the same image as we gaze. But between utter incompetency, on the one hand, and transcendent genius of utterance on the other, there are many degrees of lingual skill, and many kinds also. To be sure, a style that is mere beggarly destitution can only leave even the noblest thought in rags, but there are many respectable and effective outfitters able to commend the thought to good society, dressing it, if simply, yet with propriety and grace. Addison, for example, in his *Meditations in Westminster Abbey* is sublime—"When I look upon the tombs of the great . . ." ¹—and this from no grandeur, though purity, directness and significance of style. The grandeur is in the thought.

It is the same with Plato in his description of Atlantis.² Of course both Addison and Plato are incomparable stylists in their own places, and the only point of emphasis here is that though theirs hap-

¹ See Allusions, 5.

² See Allusions, 6.

pened not to be the grand style, yet they achieved grandeur, and this by their method of representing an imposing idea. This fact brings similar achievement nearer to the hope of others of us. Observe this instance from Plato. The blaze of Milton would have told the story differently, and we can trust Milton never to obscure the theme in the dazzle of language, as a lesser man, straining for effect, well might. The words of the great Greek lack the Englishman's earthquake, thunder, and translucent marvel, yet they do not seem inadequate. They keep one so continually in consciousness of the subject, and the subject is so stupendous, both in its present scope and also in its invisible background of spiritual powers and doom, that the subject is its own eloquence. It is like the light that burns into forgotten subordination the cloud that nevertheless made its refraction possible.

But what need to go outside the Bible for our examples? Here is the Book of Revelation. Whatever interpretation one cares to put upon it, no one can move into its atmosphere without a sense of immensity, power, and God. What a stride it has, and what a wing! From, at the beginning, noble words of reassurance, which it immediately justifies by noble vision, and safeguards with timely admonitions, it plunges into the terror and horror of the struggle with evil, darker and deeper and yet darker. There is the agony of great blackness, touched here and there with fitful gleams of hope and goodness and fidelity that are swiftly blotted out again by the

sweeping storms of sinister dominions, machinations, and powers. Blood, there is blood and pain and wickedness, even unto the sympathetic disturbance of inanimate nature. But no more inspiring moment may be found in literature than that cry which rises in the midst of the turmoil, climbs above the raging, rampant sin like a trumpet blast lifted on the wind: "*The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.*" No pious aspiration in a prayer-meeting, this! Here is faith triumphant and prophetic in a setting of earthquakes, woes, and slaughter. Here it means something! At once that thrilling cry is past as the fierce controversy moves on—dragons out of heaven, beasts out of the sea, plagues and fire: and a Crowned One bearing a sickle to reap the harvest of the world. Then amid the long moan of the peoples suddenly a shout begins to mount, "*Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!*" The anticipated and inevitable news flings higher and higher until it reverberates in heaven itself. Angelic hosts, saints gone on before through much tribulation, swell like the tides of all the oceans into a pæan of mighty thunderings: "*Alleluia! the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth!*" Immediately the Great White Throne is set. The Everlasting God, Master still, and Judge, unperturbed and unshaken, appears in his place like a granite peak before the face of which the impotent clouds are parting. Heaven and earth fly before the intolerable majesty of that Face. . . . And there is silence. . . . The quivering pain

grows quiet. . . . Out of the great stillness before the throne emerge pleasant fields, and the smiling river, serene skies filled with the Light that never shone on the sea or land. It is the dawn of the New Jerusalem, the new heavens and the new earth, wherein is nothing that defileth and nothing that causeth pain, neither sighing nor hunger nor heat. And as the peaceful scene closes, one note is left lingering like a blessed memory forever, "*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*"

All this recalls Ruskin again. "Anything which elevates the mind is sublime," he tells us, "and elevation of mind is produced by the contemplation of greatness of any kind; but chiefly, of course, by the greatness of the noblest things. . . . Greatness of matter, space, power, virtue, or beauty are thus all sublime, and there is perhaps no desirable quality of a work of art which in its perfection is not, in some way or degree, sublime."

And then he speaks of death. In this day and age, when we are so morbidly afraid of morbidity that we will not so much as say that a person is "dead," but rather that he has "passed on," or "been called hence," let us regard this. "There are few things so great as death; and there is perhaps nothing which banishes all littleness of thought and feeling in an equal degree with its contemplation. Everything, therefore, which in any way points to it, and, therefore, most dangers and powers over which we have little control are in some degree sublime. But it is

not the fear, observe, but the contemplation of death, not the instinctive shudder and struggle of self-preservation, but the deliberate measurement of the doom, which are really great or sublime in feeling. It is not while we shrink, but while we defy, that we receive or convey the highest conceptions of the fate. There is no sublimity in the agony of terror. Whether do we trace it most in the cry to the mountains, "fall on us," and to the hills, "cover us," or in the calmness of the prophecy—"And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God"? (*Modern Painters*, p. 37.)

In this sense not only is Addison sublime, but so also is the late Professor A. M. Fairbairn's account of the "Legend of Jubal."¹ It is to be remarked that the noble mind is able to treat of death in a manner that cleanses the heart. When the solemn and august mystery is contemplated by men who are too soberly concerned with the significance of being to hide from themselves any human experience, it invests life with a peculiar dignity. The one and only experience which no man can forever shun or postpone, but which is the inevitable hour of us all, it is the small and frivolous mind that cannot gaze upon it, demanding its meaning if it has one, and anyhow testing thought and behavior against its awful background. The days when men meditated upon death were days which gave birth to thoughts and heroisms which no generation is able to despise, and though

¹ See Allusions, 7.

this meditation should not become a preoccupation, neither should it be an omission.

The theme is terrific, it has aspects that appall, it is daunting and bewildering; but it is also the promise of rest; it is also, as by an inviolable necessity, the hint of somewhat that is deathless. He that looks thoughtfully into Death's calm and fathomless eyes, and ponders there what comes to him, and guards against forgetting, that man will never be small again.

Allusions, I

O FAITH! if thou art strong, thine opposite
Is mighty also, and the dull fool's sneer
Hath ofttimes shot chill palsy through the arm
Just lifted to achieve its crowning deed. . . .
The wicked and the weak, by some dark law,
Have a strange power to shut and rivet down
Their own horizon round us . . . and to blur
With surly clouds the Future's gleaming peaks,
Far seen across the brine of thankless years.
If the chosen soul could never be alone
In deep mid-silence, open-doored to God,
No greatness ever had been dreamed or done;
Among dull hearts a prophet never grew;
The nurse of full-grown souls is solitude.

.
Here am I; for what end God knows, not I;
Westward still points the inexorable soul. . . .
The inspired soul but flings his patience in,
And slowly that outweighs the ponderous globe—
One face against a whole world's unbelief,
One soul against the flesh of all mankind.

.

One day more
These muttering shoalbrains leave the helm to me:
God, let me not in their dull ooze be stranded . . .

One poor day!—
Remember whose and not how short it is!
It is God's day, it is Columbus'.
A lavish day! One day, with life and heart,
Is more than time enough to find a world.

—From LOWELL's *Columbus*.

Allusions, 2

BUT, looking deep, he saw
The thorns which grow upon this rose of life:
How the swart peasant sweated for his wage,
Toiling for leave to live; and how he urged
The great-eyed oxen through the flaming hours,
Goaded their velvet flanks; then marked he, too,
How lizard fed on ant, and snake on him,
And kite on both; . . . till everywhere
Each slew a slayer and in turn was slain,
Life living upon death. So the fair show
Veiled one vast, savage, grim conspiracy
Of mutual murder from the worm to man,
Who himself kills his fellow. . . .
The Prince Siddartha sighed. "Is this," he said,
"That happy earth they brought me forth to see?"

—SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, *The Light of Asia*.

Allusions, 3

YET come it will, the day decreed by fates;
(How my heart trembles while my tongue relates!)
The day when thou, imperial Troy! must bend,

And see thy warriors fall, thy glories end.
And yet no dire presage so wounds my mind,
My mother's death, the ruin of my kind,
Not Priam's hoary hairs defiled with gore,
Not all my brothers gasping on the shore;
As thine, Andromache! thy griefs I dread;
I see thee trembling, weeping, captive led!
In Argive looms our battles to design,
And woes, of which so large a part was thine!
To bear the victor's hard commands, or bring
The weight of waters from Hyperia's spring.
There while you groan beneath the load of life,
They cry, "Behold the mighty Hector's wife!"
Some haughty Greek, who lives thy tears to see,
Imbitters all thy woes, by naming me.
The thoughts of glory past, and present shame,
A thousand griefs, shall waken at the name!
May I lie cold before that dreadful day,
Press'd with a load of monumental clay!
Thy Hector, wrapped in everlasting sleep,
Shall neither hear thee sigh, nor see thee weep.

—*The Iliad*, Book VI.

Allusions, 4

THIS day is call'd: the feast of Crispian:
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is nam'd,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
He that shall live this day, and sees old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbors,
And say—"Tomorrow is Saint Crispian":
Then will he strip his sleeve, and show his scars,
And say, "These wounds I had on Crispian's Day."
Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
But he'll remember with advantages
What feats he did that day: . . .

This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers; . . .
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap, whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's Day.
—*Henry V*, Act IV, Scene III.

Allusions, 5

"WHEN I look upon the tombs of the great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of parents upon a tombstone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tomb of the parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow; when I see kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together."—JOSEPH ADDISON.

Allusions, 6

AFTER describing the majesty, beauty, and nobleness of the Atlanteans Plato goes on:

"Such was the vast power which the god settled in the lost island of Atlantis. . . . For many generations, as long as the divine nature lasted in them, they were obedient to

the laws, and well affectioned towards the god, whose seed they were; for they possessed true and in every way great spirits, uniting gentleness with wisdom in the various chances of life, and in their intercourse with one another. They despised everything but virtue, caring little for their present state of life, and thinking lightly of the possession of gold and other property, which seemed only a burden to them; neither were they intoxicated by luxury; nor did wealth deprive them of their self-control; but they were sober, and saw clearly that all these goods are increased by virtue and friendship with one another, whereas by too great regard and respect for them, they are lost, and friendship with them. By such reflections, and by the continuance in them of a divine nature, the qualities which we have described grew and increased among them; but when the divine portion began to fade away, and became diluted too often and too much with the mortal admixture, and the human nature got the upper hand, they then, being unable to bear their fortune, behaved unseemly, and to him who had an eye to see, grew visibly debased, for they were losing the fairest of their precious gifts; but to those who had no eye to see the true happiness, they appeared glorious and blessed at the very time when they were full of avarice and unrighteous power. Zeus, the god of gods, who rules according to law, and is able to see into such things, perceiving that an honorable race was in a woeful plight, and wanting to inflict punishment on them, that they might be chastened and improve, collected all the gods into their most holy habitation, which, being in the center of the world beholds all created things. And when he had called them together he spake as follows: . . ."

—CRITIAS.

Allusions, 7

"IN THE old, soft, sweet days before men knew death,

when all that was known of it was the single black spot in the memory of Cain, his descendants lived in gladsome idlesse; they played, they sang, they loved, they danced, in a life that had no gravity and no greatness; but when the second death came, and men saw that there had come to one of their own race a sleep from which there was no awaking, a new meaning stole into life. The horizon which limited it defined it, and made it great. Time took a new value; affection, by growing more serious, became nobler; men thought of themselves more worthily and of their deeds more truly when they saw that a night came when no man could work. Friends and families lived in a tenderer light when the sun was known to shine but for a season; earth became lovelier when they thought the place which knew them now would soon know them no more. The limit set to time drove their thoughts out towards eternity. The idea of the death, which was to claim them, bade them live in earnest, made them feel that there was something greater than play; for death had breathed into life the spirit out of which all tragic and all heroic things come."

And Dr. Fairbairn comments: "Death has thus added to the pomp and the fruitfulness, to the glory and the grandeur of life. Without it we should have had no struggle of will against destiny, of the thought which wanders through eternity and beats itself into strength and hope against the bars and the barriers of time; without it man would have had no sense of his kinship with the Infinite, for the finite would have been enough for him. And if a soul made for eternity were to be withered by time, would not that, in another and darker sense than attends the end of our mortal being, be the death of all that is worthiest to live?"—(*Philosophy of the Christian Religion*, p. 143.)

ITS SERVICE IN THE EMBASSY OF CHRIST

I. CONVENTIONALIZED ADORATION

"WE ARE ambassadors for Christ," writes Paul. As such we represent him often enough in courts that are hostile. We sometimes appear before those who are ready to be friendly if they can. We reason, we persuade, we interpret, we press men to decision. " 'What think ye of Christ,' friend? When all's done and said, like you this Christianity or not? It may be false, but will you wish it true? Has it your vote to be so if it can? "

But if Jesus Christ has in him those values that preachers claim for him, the world is not convinced of it, neither is the church, sometimes, one fears, neither are the preachers themselves. Long familiarity and much repetition can blunt realization of any truth. Classics can be damned by much praise. Centuries of almost universal adulation of a hero can prove too much for our resistance, so that our assent to the chorus becomes necessary lest by denial we should seem to confess to intellectual or moral feebleness. But the assent is languid. We join the universal choir, but without enthusiasm because without intelligence. It is the fashion to admit the greatness of Dante, but how few know enough to realize the truth of what they admit!

I do not know of any need in Christianity quite

so central or paramount as the need for expounding to our times the grounds of Jesus' greatness. Conventionalized repetitions do not effect this, neither do poetic flights, nor piety. Nothing should be assumed by the preacher (unless it be a reasonable amount of reliability in the documentary sources), audiences should not be supposed to be discerning and comprehending in their estimate of this noble figure, arguments in support of *doctrines*, whether of his "deity," of the "atonement," or something else, should be recognized as of decidedly secondary importance. What is primary is that men become impressed with *Jesus' natural right* to be heard.

Exposition, however, should not be of such puerile kind as would immediately be written down as barren of true thought and weight if offered of some one else. Evidences of a kind that could only shame an Aristotle if advanced as proofs of his quality and worth have too often been paraded consequentially of the Founder of Christianity. The time has more than come for the pulpit to show that Jesus can sustain all the robustness of criticism to which incisive mind can subject him, and in claiming greatness for him the preacher should at least be able to make it apparent that he himself has ideas of what greatness is. How shall one enthrone a Titian unless he first know more than a little of the art of drawing and of color? Ruskin setting out to tell us of painters ancient and modern would be an impertinence without that extensive knowledge of painting and pictures which made him so searching a com-

mentator. Now, however, whom Ruskin praises is praised indeed! But what is greatness, and why is Jesus great, why is he greatest? Men will see the answer only as they are enabled to, and they will not be shown the answer by preachers who themselves have never seen.

II. HOW RUSKIN UNVEILED TURNER

There is need, then, that preachers in our day do for Jesus some such thing as Ruskin did for Turner. There are some interesting elements of parallel. Turner wrote: "What I do must be done rightly; but I know also that no man now living in Europe cares to understand it; and the better I do it, the less he will see the meaning of it." How much must some such sentiment in a higher realm have been that of Jesus! Unto this day the crowd cares little enough to understand him, and his pearls remain too often cast before swine. Turner was for long despised and rejected by a generation that could only scorn an originality and truthfulness it was unable to appreciate. Turner was "above the heads of his reporters." "He hath a devil," they said. Yet when Ruskin rose up to declare and prove him the peer of all landscape painters, this discerning critic wrote: "J. M. W. Turner is the only man who has ever given an entire transcript of the whole system of nature, and is, in this point of view, the only perfect landscape painter whom the world has ever seen." But these are claims which, with suitable variations,

we have been wont to make of Jesus, Jesus the mirror of human and divine nature, the only perfect exponent thereof of all the children of men. And if he indeed be that, it is right that he should be reclaimed for a skeptical age. The age may be expected to benefit a great deal more from a rediscovery of Jesus than any age could from the rescuing of a Turner.

But, now, how did Ruskin go about unveiling the virtues of Turner to a supercilious world?

1. Ruskin found Turner unappreciated chiefly because England lay under the spell of an old traditional conception of what constituted excellence in painting. England had become artistically blind. The master of all painters of nature had arisen and there was none to see him. Had they but looked more upon that glowing world which was his theme and less at "the masters," they themselves might have seen sufficient of the truth to have heard Turner's voice. But how can one who stands open-faced and thoughtful before things as they are, speaking honestly what he sees, hope to convince an artificial time that he speaks well? And how may he who sees deep say things that are recognizable as true by another whose vision only skips jauntily upon the surface?

2. The great art critic did not resort to the lazy luxuries of lip service, encomium and panegyric. At any time these are justified only after the truth has been shown to justify them, and until then they carry no persuasions except to the already persuaded. In-

stead of declaring fervently that the best of all landscape painters was Turner, Ruskin did something better.

3. He wrote *Modern Painters*. From ditch to ditch he fought Turner's opponents, fought them with superior knowledge, judgment, and truth. Not by special pleading, nor by the temporary victories of skillful dialectic, but by sheer revelation and vindication he made the masterfulness of Turner apparent: and with the shining forth of Turner came a new era in painting. In *Modern Painters* he did for this artist what preachers might well be envious to do for Jesus, and preachers may do worse than observe his method.

(a) He was sympathetic, understanding, and fair to the ancient painters, acknowledging their strength, the unsurpassed character of certain of their contributions, while he scrupulously indicated wherein they failed. And the failures were ghastly enough!

(b) He turned destroyingly upon those respected, conventionalized, and shallow art critics who parroted stodgy imbecilities about the virtues of the ancients and the heresies of the moderns. The people liked the familiar speech, the well-established canons of judgment, which they thought they could comprehend and which they supposed to be sound because comprehensible, flattering themselves with the illusion of wisdom so long as they could comprehend. Yet all this fashion of thought Ruskin ruthlessly tore. Snobbish complacency he met with unsparing irony and scorn. But let him himself be heard. If I

suggest this excerpt as a valuable hint at one method of dealing with frivolous objectors to Christ it is only to recollect immediately that, as Ruskin was a modern heretic dealing with opponents who represented the established and orthodox school, perhaps not all preachers should disdain to ask if here there can possibly be reproof for them as well. Orthodoxy needs its critics.

"Writers like the present critic of *Blackwood's Magazine* deserve more respect—the respect due to honest, hopeless, helpless imbecility. There is something exalted in the innocence of their feeble-mindedness: one cannot suspect them of partiality, for it implies feeling; nor of prejudice, for it implies some previous acquaintance with their subject. . . . We are not insulted with opinions on music from persons ignorant of its notes; nor with treatises on philology by persons unacquainted with the alphabet; but here is page after page of criticism, which one may read from end to end, looking for something which the writer knows, and finding nothing. . . . Nay, he leaves us not to conjecture his calibre from internal evidence; he candidly tells us (Oct. 1842) that he has been studying trees only for the last week. . . . How low must art and its interests sink, when the public mind is inadequate to the detection of this effrontery of incapacity! . . . There may come a time when the public shall be themselves able to distinguish ribaldry from reasoning, and may require some better and higher qualifications in their critics of art, than the experience of a school-boy, and the capacities of a buffoon" (*Modern Painters* XXXII).

(c) Nevertheless, sarcasm and terrible exposure of cheapness were by no means our critic's characteristic weapons, fearfully able though he was to

wield them. On the contrary, he overwhelmed in the only legitimate and permanent way—by irresistible knowledge of his subject. His subject was nature, nature in its relation to art. And—this is notable—knowledge of nature is not constituted alone by *experience* of her. To find “a pleasure in the pathless woods” or “a rapture on the lonely shore” is not to know nature.

Nevertheless, who would be satisfied to pretend that nature may be truly known *without* such experience of her, as if detached examination of clouds, trees, and fountains, however precise and painstaking, could ever of itself grasp her secret? Not to have experienced the emotion of awe in her stupendous moments, not to have felt the presence that disturbs in her moods of solemn hush, never to have realized joy in her beauty, is to be disqualified from real insight into nature. Then knowledge of color and form, skill in mixing and drawing and shading, intellectual understanding of the history, laws, problems, and technique of art, must always, even at their best, continue to produce less than truth. The picture will suffer a spiritual lack, and it is the spirit that is life.

Howbeit, having insisted that experience, *feeling*, if you like—provided feeling is allowed sufficient range and variety not to be provincial and exclusive, for not all are susceptible to the same emotions—having insisted that this is necessary to genuine knowledge of nature, let it be now further urged that this is not enough. There must be added acute intel-

lectual scrutiny and grasp. The thing that is experienced, and also the experience itself, must be brought, both of them, under analytical observation, the emotion must be examined unemotionally—as far as this is possible—and the thing that caused it must be demanded of, that it may answer why it should have occasioned such an effect. For highest work, one must possess both sensibilities and fearless intellectual force.

III. NEED OF INSIGHT INTO HUMAN NATURE

How pertinent all this is to our exposition of Christ is obvious. No man can realize the magnitude of Jesus who has not a rich insight into human nature. The amazing trueness of our Lord to the stuff that men are made of constitutes his unassailable strength and authority: but if one never has glimpsed human nature shrewdly enough to know whether Jesus is true to it or not, how shall he appreciate that strength and authority? The surface flutter of life occupies us far more than we realize. Standardized opinions of what and why and how man is, and what he wants, and how to get it; fashions of behavior, often absurd, sometimes ruinous; cheap and popular philosophies, the manifold froth of things—these are too frequently expounded consequentially by pen and pulpit as if they were indeed of the very heart and substance of man. But upon “the secret springs of action that lie beneath the surface and the show,” upon the real hungers of men,

upon the broad ways that run through heartbreaking illusion to bankruptcy, upon the other ways that reward, upon the hidden places of resource and repair—in a word, upon the interior of the house in which man actually lives (or dies!) and not upon the front show window he presents so assiduously to his fellows, even to the delusion of himself as much as of them: *there* the gaze of the great seers has lingered. And when the seers have spoken, all that is profoundly human in mankind has become resonant in answer, like the deep replying murmur of a mighty bell in the midst of which a note that is native to it has been struck.

No one has sounded that note so effectively as Jesus. When he is heard, the response of the human heart is invariable. The inescapable quality of what he had to say, its universality and permanence, its vivid trueness in every age alike because of its belonging to the essential and unchanging nature of things, seem to have been present to his own mind. What is more ancient than creation? What is as final as fate? "Before Abraham was, I am." "I am the Light of the World, the Way, the Truth, the Life." "Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." The sources of man's misery and of his greatness are seen by Jesus. The power of that long, lean wave of wrong which casts its dreary dirge deep in man's interior night is known to him. But also he apprehends that sunlit sea, that God, which breaks in music on the spirit's upper

marge, which often merely haunts, whispering along the sand, but which ever and anon shakes to the centre as it falls in thunder: always singing, however, in all its moods, of hope, of promise, and of fulfillment. Yes, Jesus realized that, too, or he would not have been roundly man, and he gave to it the dearest names we have—Love, Father, Shepherd, Comforter.

But it is certain that the scope and lordship of Jesus are never made apparent by preachers who, knowing theological doctrine, only doctrine know. Prove to your heart's content all you may of Jesus' divinity, "Eternal Sonship," deity, "finished work," sinlessness, or whatever else seems to you important, but be sure that the only Christ who will ever rule us men is he who meets us in life's common way. The real Helper of Men is unwound of metaphysic and far-flown theory. He is one who by native insight looks us through all-seeingly, tells us where and why we ail, shows us the way out and up, and proves himself, by immovable, immortal personal soundness, both in character and in judgment, so superior to cavil, that, though in malice we may crucify him today, tomorrow he will rise again and speak as before, final, ineluctable, as the truth laden Word of Ages. Let men see him thus, the living brother of men, movingly wise, and their own experience of life and of themselves will be there to cry: "True, true, true!"

Beyond this, doctrine may mount as it is able. Mount and unfold it *should*. Personality has its im-

plications, most provoking in a personality such as Jesus'. Nevertheless, we need not persuade ourselves that the majority will ever in our day learn to revel in religious philosophy, however much the majority will be the better for occasional doses of it. Whether in occasional doses or in extensive courses, such philosophy must always seem to be so much word-spinning and idea-juggling unless it be shown as an inevitable tree growing from a Seed that justifies it.

Unfortunately, our pulpits continue to resound with claims about Christ that can carry no conviction except to the convinced, for the reason that too many preachers themselves appear never to have been overwhelmed with the natural magnitude of the one for whom the claims are made. The preacher who makes prodigious assertions about Christ should at least be able to convince his congregation that the Christ he has found is in very truth prodigious. Platitudes and second-hand theories never are sufficient for this, text-book creeds, professorial inoculations are not, either. Great preaching rests ever on one's discovering truth afresh. There is something sublime in the spectacle of a man so possessed of the tremendousness of Jesus that he is straining thought and language to utter all the far reach of what he has found. But how pitiful it is to listen to the sounding brass and clanging cymbals of high-soaring declarations that have only dogmatism and not revelation as their root!

Here, then, we still are. In an age that becomes increasingly impatient of the Christology inherited by

the Church, whatever is true in that Christology can be saved no more surely than by demonstrating again the splendid proportions of Christ. We pronounce Jesus, his personality and character, the supreme treasure of mankind. But such pronouncement must be relieved of presumption. It must be given firm settlement upon its grounds. If the grounds are inadequate we should diminish our pronouncement, regarding honesty as at least a Christian virtue. If the grounds are enough we should reveal them, and Christ will be glorified. Those grounds are never to be felt in their force, however, never therefore to be expounded with thrilling conviction by the preacher, nor seen by the hearer, *unless there is knowledge of human nature*. It is there, in the nature of man, that Christ is grounded, there where the human surge and the divine breath make mystery together. To grow in knowledge of man is to be made more capable of perceiving the force of Christ.

But knowledge of human nature, as of physical nature, is not born of experience alone nor of intellect alone. To have felt pain, temptation, and the longings that are human, to have shared the incompleteness of "earthly" satisfactions, the mystic action of the "divine" within, to have entered into the strain, the struggle, the bewilderment of human life is not to know human nature. Similarly, experience of religion, contrary to what seems to be broadly assumed, gives no brief for expounding religion. Much reflection, much disciplined thought brooding

upon the experience, is also an essential to knowledge. Know what is human the preacher must, know it sympathetically but intelligently, by swift sensibilities but by energy of mind, know it he must, for it is thus alone that he can be furnished to speak of Christ. Who can be enthusiastic of any key if he never knew the problem of the lock? Or who, knowing naught of renegades in Carthage and perils on the field, can intelligently boast of Hannibal?

Says Ruskin of a shallow critic: "He may be pardoned for not comprehending Turner, for long preparation and discipline are necessary before the abstract and profound philosophy of that artist can be met." Ere Ruskin had finished his task he had not only shown that he comprehended Turner, but in addition he had made his audience also comprehend him and thrill by what they comprehended. This is the preacher's task for Christ. I have sought to show that, even as to realize Turner one must know physical nature, so to realize Jesus Christ one must know human nature and divine.

Toward such knowledge, as we are now ready to illustrate, literature has an incalculable contribution to make. Literature also is a son of man, a son of God. If a leaf, it has been asked, reflects the glory of God, how much more that masterpiece of the human mind, the *Iliad*? "Shakespeare . . . has availed himself of his psychological genius to develop all the minutiae of the human heart." There may we learn of man more widely, more opulently, than our single personal experience and thought of him could

ever have been adequate to. There, too, in the gorgeous range of human literature, as we traverse it more and more, and discerningly, shall we come to see that it, or human life as found in it, dramatically and conclusively supports and vindicates Christ.

IV. SENSE OF TRAGEDY

I. *Great literature justifies Christ's sense of tragedy.*

"Tragedy as conceived by Shakespeare is concerned with the ruin or the restoration of the soul, and of the life of men. In other words, its subject is the struggle of good and evil in the world." In the view of Jesus no more than in that of Shakespeare is mere violent death necessarily tragedy. The Prodigal Son is a tragedy, though he was not killed. Dives is a tragedy, though he fared sumptuously until he died in his bed. The Pharisees are a tragedy, though honored of men. "*Macbeth* is tragic because of the promise and possibilities which have come to nothing, not because the hero and his wife died miserable deaths." "The powers of evil in which he had trusted turn against him and betray him."

To the insight of Jesus, so disastrous is that betrayal that it is the one supreme catastrophe of all others to be feared. The revenges of wrong-doing are subtle and far reaching. They creep like an invisible bane which taints a landscape and is not recognized until the horror is reaped. Characteristic to his method, Jesus objectified and made graphic the elusive, silent, and untraceable truth. He said:

"It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to be cast into hell . . . where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "The Gehenna of fire," a terrible picture, quite impossible to an age—ours, we sometimes fear—that cannot look him in the eyes, that hopes by hushing speech to alter facts, and from the vocabulary of which the word tragedy, in its spiritual and moral sense, has largely gone. Jesus was a realist. He faced life. He was no victim of "wish psychology." The appalling disasters that men bring upon themselves were unpleasant to admit, but because they were there he admitted them. The softness, the lack of honesty, the love of pleasantness at any price, even at the price of truth, and therefore the deeply dangerous unsoundness in the mood of alarming numbers in our time, is a startling offset to this sharp integrity of Jesus.

Behind this realism of our Lord's there was always one vast faith in the significance of man. Personality was the paramount value; nothing akin to it in the wide universe, except God himself. Personality was the climax of all things that are. Its life never consisting in the abundance of things possessed, could not be profited by a whole world of material gain. Its rest, its glory and fulfillment lay in naught less than affinity with the complete Personality of the Heavenly Father. "How much," then, "is a man better than a sheep?" or, we may add, than all woolen mills and the commerce and profit thereof? To metallicize himself until his fineness is

dead, that is tragedy! To invert the true emphasis until selfishness is so established as to have lost even its ability to question its right to reign, that is tragedy! To have grown incapable of participation in that wider, final Environment, "God," which is the only hope of the preservation of personality's present gains and promise of their increase; to have, on the contrary, become amazingly "practical," adapted to this immediate, tangible, and familiar world, a "success" here but a failure in the higher adaptation, an enjoyer of sense, but numb to the meanings and powers of spirit, *that is tragedy!* That the results of it are destroying enough is borne out by the entire evolutionary stream, the shores of which are strewn with the poor memorials of types that have simply perished because their proximate environment was the only one to which they could adapt. Woe to the type that cannot answer and adventure when the wider environment is calling!

Now I do not hesitate to insist that the modern pulpit has very considerably lost the tragic note. Wherein it is still to be heard it more often than not has no tragedy in it, but is rather a pale and unconvincing reëchoing of warnings and prophecies that have long since lost their power. Reactionary dogmatism and bluster is not thunder. The accents of a past age are not impressive to this. The authority of Scripture texts, or of ancient Church pronouncements in creeds and confessions, may retain all of its old unchallengeable nature in the opinion of some preachers and of some of their hearers; the majority

will need more. The older ways of preaching retribution rested back originally on human experience, from which the terrible Warning first was born. Wherever the Warning has come to rest in tradition, however old, or in writings, however sacred, it has lost its somber weight. Once more it must be shown that the facts of human nature are what they are. They grow more patent as history becomes more accurate and as the sciences advance. Nemesis, so extensively ignored by the moment's easy fashion, is in fact gloomed afresh and made more formidable by every new insight we achieve. If, therefore, the old words have ceased to mean anything to our audiences, we must find new words. If "sin" and "hell" and "wrath of God" seem no longer to bear upon life as men find it, we should still be able to show men that life as they find it really is the same as was once signified by those words. Who cares for words? it is the truth that we preach. And the truth, if it is to be vital, must not be hidden in language or concepts remote from the common experience of men.

Recognition of the fact of human tragedy must be recovered for the pulpit. As a matter of fact, it never has been absent from really great preaching, any more than shadows have ever been absent from true art. Do we wish to commend the Gospel, to represent the radiance of that which God can do for man? Ruskin shows that "the distinctness of shadows is the chief means of expressing vividness of light." In one full chorus the world of letters

maintains the place of shadows on the broad canvas of life. Goethe, Shakespeare, Byron, Ibsen, Milton, Hugo—what would remain of them if the tragic were suppressed? Christ's sure grasp on human reality is sustained by every great exponent of man since the world began, and this fact should give confidence to preachers who wish to be loyal to the profoundest truths of life. It should also supply them with endless instances with which to exemplify and enforce this aspect of their message. Satan cowering beneath the newborn sun, smitten by memory of the nobler brightness from which he fell, finding no place to fly from his remorse because he himself is hell; the once fearless Macbeth now starting in guilty fright at every sudden noise, and, twenty years later, when the course is fully run and all the harvest is in, ruminating bitterly on the hollow profitlessness of life—"a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"—surely, both of them, among the commonest, direst, surest penalties of false living! Clever, cynical Mephistopheles, while Faust goes seeking the ideal Beauty, follows his own downward bent until he reaches the ghastly end of that dark way, and is in the presence of perfected Ugliness, the Pokyads, who—horror of horrors!—are *admired* of him, as he of them! So we have Milton, Shakespeare, Goethe, and these are but three of the prophets who stand staunchly by the preacher when he would be faithful to his Lord and to his flock in declaring that men who do wrong must suffer.

2. *Great literature sustains Christ's infinite pity.* "The still, sad music of humanity," wrung out of the suffering, tempted, complexity of life, moved Jesus with compassion, but the literature of every land and age is also moved by it. He felt the dehumanizing burden of the years as it lies upon hosts of people, whereunder they become like "The Man with the Hoe," "dead to rapture and despair, a thing that grieves not and that never hopes, stolid and stunned, a brother to the ox." The diseases and bereavements of men weighed on him. But in this pity of Jesus there was something even more understanding still. It is hinted at in such passages as: "God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him." Not to censure, but to coöperate toward health. More than one incident implies the Master's consciousness of the tangled problem that life is, his slowness to blame, his sympathy with the blindness, the blundering, which so many others agreed to condemn. It is a pity, a patience, which seems to be shared by his followers in proportion as they move closer to their Master's reading of men and their motives. Not always is it quite so easy as some think to decide the right or wrong of people's acts. And this realization of life's complexity is continually divulged by great writers. They work at it in a thousand ways. If any preacher's experience of life has not been extensive enough, or his observation not reflective enough, to

teach him compassion and forbearance toward human frailty, he may yet learn them in the pages of books.

Ruskin's marriage and divorce, for instance, may not have been according to the strictest canons of prescribed propriety, yet one will not easily escape the feeling that Ruskin did not merely a right but a noble thing. Let the story be set down as told by the graceful pen of Frederic Rowland Marvin in his *Love and Letters*:

Interesting in this connection is the story of the divorce of Lady Millais from the distinguished art-critic, John Ruskin, and of her marriage with the great artist who has immortalized her rare beauty upon many a canvas known to lovers of whatever pleases the cultivated taste and imagination in all lands. In Lady Millais Nature provided the artist with face and figure such as painters and sculptors delight to imitate in colors and reproduce in marble. But not only was she one of the most beautiful of women, she was as well marvelously brilliant and fascinating as a conversationalist. "She was a handsome, tall young woman," wrote one who knew her well, "with rosy cheeks and wavy black hair." Ruskin was much older than she, but he fell deeply in love with her; and she, then Euphemia Gray, a young and gay Scottish beauty, obeyed her parents, and gave the hand that sculptors delighted to contemplate to a man honest as the daylight, but often crabbed and opinionated, and in many ways ill-suited to her artistic, joyous, and mercurial temper. The marriage was not a happy one. Her heart and spirits failed, and Ruskin could not but see that he had made one of the saddest of mistakes. All the world knew that he was a man of just spirit and kind heart. He did what he could to comfort and cheer his young wife, but the fates were

against him. He was too wise a man not to know what Richter had known before him, that "the Fates and Furies glide with linked hands over life not less surely and swiftly than do the Graces and Sirens"; and he was as well too wise a man to contend against manifest destiny when at last arrived the auspicious moment for a noble and kindly self-sacrifice.

In 1854 John Millais was for a time with Ruskin in Scotland. He painted Ruskin standing by the Falls of Glenfinias. The two men were companionable and happy together. Long hours were spent in the most delightful fellowship. But Ruskin could not be blind to the fact that the young girl who by parental arrangement was his wife, but who had almost nothing in common with him, had in the society of the artist a new life. The enthusiasm ripened into love. With a generosity as astonishing as it was noble, John Ruskin placed the beautiful hand of the young wife in that of his friend, and, with a voice tremulous with emotion, gave them both his kindly blessing. A decree of nullity dissolved the old marriage that was not made in heaven, and on the third of June, 1855, the new union of Millais and Mrs. Ruskin was celebrated at Dower's Well, Ruskin himself being present when his former wife pronounced the solemn words that made her the life-long companion of another.

Mrs. Alice Hegan Rice says of one of her characters: "She was very young, with the stern, uncompromising standards of girlhood; life was black or white to her, and time had not yet filled in the canvas with the myriad grays that blend into one another until all lines are effaced, and only the Master Artist knows the boundaries." "Not to judge!" Later it was possible to add this: "The friendship of these simple people opened her eyes to great problems of human-

ity, and as she worked among them and knew life as it was, the hard little bud of her girlhood blossomed into the great soft rose of womanhood." "The young have such cheap, hard judgment," writes Galsworthy. Can it be that some of us preachers have never grown up?

The Roman Catholic Church has at last taken up the bones of Abélard and Héloïse and laid them intermingled in the same grave. Admirable! Much good it will do those two hearts that were frowned so uglily apart five hundred years ago! Yet how could it have been otherwise then—without a system being shaken to its base? Victor Hugo's old conventionalist did the Church much injury. That was perhaps not a good thing. But "I tore up the altar cloth, it is true," he said, "but it was to stanch with it the wounds of my country." Then upon the lips of all except the ecclesiastical fanatic suddenly falters the word of censure, and instead we wonder. Who desires to encourage drinking among young men, and who wishes to see youth alcoholic? Yet in *Journey's End* Captain Stanhope, the idol of the brigade, drinks like a fish. He is the only man whose courage does not break, whose nerves bombardment cannot shatter. Then it comes out, he is in such natural terror that the only way he can keep himself from bolting is to drug himself into dulled sensibility. He sticks to his duty, encourages his men, keeps himself their example—but would go mad if he did not keep himself half drunk. Even if there should be found here and there preachers confident in their blame of him

in his drinking ways, I doubt if there could be found soldiers to join in the blame—not soldiers who have been through a modern bombardment.

So do our *literati* feel with Jesus the pathetic complexity of life. It is, however, a feeling which can have value in it only as it is borne by one whose own standards remain elevated. Doubtless Jean Jacques Rousseau would be found slow enough in chastisement of his brothers' moral doings, but his would be the moral tolerance of a man who, possessing no heights, could perceive no depths. It was far otherwise with Jesus. Our Lord added to a swift sense of depravity a supreme exertion to guide men. Perplexing life may be, twisted motives may become, but the way of a man in life's maze will scarcely be lost if he dare accept for himself the spirit of Christ's twin-ethic and proceed accordingly. The obligation of a man to unfold and respond to the Spirit, and his obligation to unfold and answer to society—impossible until he yields his most interior self to healthy good will—is surely the very foundation of proper ethical character. Did not Kant see some such thing? "Nothing can possibly be conceived in the world, or even out of it, which can be called good without qualification, except a Good Will." Like all who have thought at all upon the subject, Kant realized the impossibility of any code of cut-and-dried rules being made to apply to all cases, and he made a splendid effort to steer us. "Canst thou also will that thy maxim should be a universal law?" Yes, we

answer, Ruskin answers, the old conventionalist answers, Captain Stanhope answers: yes, *all the circumstances being the same*. "But," Christ might interject, "how will you dare trust yourself to judge your case honorably and without self-concession, and also view your maxim in the light of what is best for the social whole, unless you first are dedicated to that personal spirit and attitude which I state in my twofold 'commandment'?"

Even so, human decisions will often err, and though we learn much from mistakes we suffer much also. Life again and again refuses to fit the programs of the moralists. The great pity characteristic of Jesus is to be found in the Bishop of *Les Misérables*. To the murderous looking galley slave who has been accommodated at his table the Bishop says: "You need not have told me who you were; this is not my house, but the house of Christ. This door does not ask a man who enters whether he has a name, but if he has a sorrow." This is the good man who wrote on the margin of his book: "Oh, you who are! Ecclesiastes called you Omnipotent; the Maccabees call you Creator; the Epistle to the Ephesians calls you Liberty; Baruch calls you Immensity; the Psalms call you Wisdom and Truth; St. John calls you Light; the Book of Kings calls you Lord; Exodus calls you Providence; Leviticus, Holiness; Esdras, Justice; Creation called you God; Man calls you the Father; but Solomon calls you Mercy; and that is the fairest of all your names."

3. *Great literature knows Christ's experience of the numinous*—the feeling of the supra-sensuous, of the divine. Jesus seems to have been haunted by it, as of Something all-pursuing, able to be fled from or sinned against, but never to be wholly escaped. To fly from It was to be "lost," to "waste" oneself in a "far country," but such was the persistence of Its mystic attentions that It was like nothing so much as an infinite, waiting patience and an exhaustless, seeking love. The highest end of personality lay in becoming increasingly sensitive, friendly, and responsive to It. He did not discuss It philosophically, but described It symbolically, religiously, calling It "Shepherd," "Father." There were times when he appears to have been unconscious of It, "forsaken" even, and that the tide of invasion was at times lower, at times higher, would seem to be indisputable. There were hours when the inbreak of the mysterious waves was tremendous, and then he exulted, was "glorified," "transfigured." With jealous care he defended himself from the cauterizing influences of this present world, living heartily in it and yet retiring from it at frequent seasons to "pray," inviting upon himself continued and enhanced register of that heavenly power which to him was God. And he urged his followers to do likewise.

It is in this probably, at least in the maturity of this experience, that Jesus is most original. We everyone share something of all that he was or he

would be meaningless to us, but he outpaces us in so many ways that we can only call him "the first born among many brethren," "the Elder Brother," and leave it at that. There are some few, however, whose stride is great enough to challenge comparison with even himself, rare geniuses in his own realm, so that from our places far in the rear we might ask whether they do not all run abreast. Yet more careful observation must reveal that not all these are equal. One by one they are detected in some lack and fall behind. Buddha, that gentle and saintly "Light of Asia," he stays longest, pressing ahead of others, strongly abreast of Jesus. "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Buddha might ask, a question which cannot be argued either in his case or in Christ's because of inadequate records if not from the very nature of it. But from such a meager theme as "sinlessness" we may turn to the positive, ripe adulthood of these two characters. "They never did anything wrong!" Who cares? they did so gloriously and magnetically *right*! Morally, may one be preferred beyond the other? In compassions? You cannot improve on perfection! In selfless sacrifice? In heroic challenge of ancient systems? In power of thought? In gorgeous, lonely self-reliance? In personal honor and purity? Only a partisan will claim undoubted moral superiority of one of these great souls above the other.

But it is when we pass from the moral to the spiritual that the superiority of Jesus becomes apparent. In "God-consciousness" he stands alone. His

"faculty of divination" makes him the towering religious genius of all time. Even the noble Buddha falls away from him here.

This thing that he felt, this mystic invasion, realized with such immortal clarity by Jesus, dis-severed in his thought from so much crudity, visits all men, savage and civilized, visits them frequently in manners that are little connected in their minds with religion.¹ The preacher should have large views of this profound phenomenon of the soul, should be intelligently informed of its modes, should be skillful in aiding its depth but in keeping it sane. In entering the small crypt of the ancient Crusaders' Church, Barking-by-the-Tower, where nowadays souls are wont to drop in for brief periods of isolation and worship, I noticed myself hushed by the spiritual silence and dim light of the hallowed place, and though only another was present, I spoke in undertones. I found the same in the heart of the Great Pyramid. Men have their moments. "All the mighty ones on high *whisper low*: Yahweh is King!" Something is feeling after us then. The movement of the branches is not the wind, but many emotions stir in the soul of man that would not stir if there were no God. "That voice is round me like a bursting sea!" confesses the fugitive who had hoped to escape it. "Wa, wa," cried the wild Clotaire at the last ebb of his life, "what great God is this that pulls down the strength of the strongest kings!" It speaks to us according to the hour and the place. And because

¹ See Allusions, 1.

literature is born of man and of God it is replete with testimony to that Voice.

Scandinavian mythology, for instance, shudders with it. Read Colum's *Children of Odin*.

Three dread winters, the winter of storm and snow, the winter of war and blood, and the winter of wolves and famine, three dark and destroying winters preceded The Twilight of the Gods, and in the hard and frozen world the Gods waited in moody apprehension. The last dread battle was at hand.

A cock crew; another cock crew; and another—in the bowels of the earth among the Dwarfs, in Jötunheim rousing the Giants, up in Asgard warning the Gods.

A dog barked, the bloody-mouthed Hound Garm, down in Gnipa's Cave, and a foreboding ran through all the powers, and they armed, and the Tree of Life moaned in all its branches. The Wolf Fenir broke loose.

Then was heard the galloping of horses . . . the laughter of Loki . . . the blowing of Heimdall's horn . . . the opening of Valhalla's doors.

Here is felt that uncanny sense of something not ourselves, conscious, intelligent, and *greater*.

Where that sense is noblest it is always closely allied with ethical obligation. Here again Jesus showed insight into the essential nature of the numinous as he felt it: "O righteous Father," not merely "O Father." The moral nature of God lays obligation upon the one whom he visits. Odin and his fellow gods laid down their lives at last in battle with

evil, accepting death that evil too might die and dying be robbed of power upon those who should come after. Divinity is also ethical.

VII. THE EYES OF ALL WAIT UPON HIM

4. *Great literature declares the primacy of Christ.* This it does without design and without having Christ in mind, but simply and naturally, yet so significantly as to offer an effective apologetic, if one were needed, of the Church's faith in him as Master of us all.

(a) Literature reveals what greatness is. Through the sieve of the centuries most things pass into oblivion, but the things that are able to remain have the reverence of mankind, for they are sifted, substantial, and worthy. Mankind recognizes them as born of real human experience, therefore as true and imperishable. Mankind further recognizes that particular literature as greatest which, by real insight, is most loyal to such human truth. The sense of tragedy, of pity, of right, of the divine spoken of in this chapter are among the essential characteristics of whatever is permanent among us and, in electing to acknowledge these as marks of value, to be cherished as sound explications of the life of man, we confess our estimate of greatness. We demand of letters something more than brilliance of style, which we condemn to the brief mortality of the painted butterfly. But the bones of our literary mastodons, though shaped in other fashions than our current

types, are dug up from all past ages, having been able to survive because of the substance in them.

That same substance which constitutes the abiding worth in letters constitutes first the chief consequence of human life. Great are letters, greater still is man who, like a god before a mirror, contemplates himself in the pages of books—sometimes to see himself only distorted there, so that he cares not to save the glass so poorly made. Greater than letters is man, but if letters furnish us with illustrations of those elements which man admits are of his life, and if the greatness of literature rests upon its ability so to do, then here we have unconscious testimony of Christ, testimony in something far other than the theological realm. For those very elements which immortalize literature are also conspicuous elements in the strength of Jesus. We have already noted some of them.

No fair judge will care to say that what makes the glory of a printed page does not also constitute the glory of a man if it be found in him. Greater than books is man in this also, that he is able to reveal transcendently in himself what can only shine less glowingly upon the inanimate page. Find the least destructible feature of the writings of Homer, of Sophocles, of Spencer, of Goethe, and you will have found those very features which in Jesus Christ have conquered men. Greatness is greatness wherever it is found. Bernard Shaw's description of the executioner returning from throwing the ashes of Joan of Arc in the river might still more truly be offered of

one coming back from some attempt to annihilate Jesus. Joan's heart would not burn, and it would not drown. There is always something in the immortals that you cannot destroy. Tomorrow they are up and about again, more alive than ever. The spleen of a moment cannot reverse the verdict of ages. Not by accident is Jesus acclaimed as cast in heroic mold. The preacher, learning to discern the perduring values that make great literature human, values deeper than style and broader than place or age, recognizes an undesigned tribute to Jesus Christ, whose preëminence lies in just those same qualities.

(b) Literature concedes Jesus' place by yielding to his judgment. He is the arbiter of excellence. Ithuriel-like, his touch has infallible power to reveal the character of a thing, forcing every thought, philosophy, or principle into its own likeness. The enormous soundness of Jesus' points of view are nowhere more shown than in their being deferred to, though not necessarily as such, by all real literature. That is, what mankind insists upon as being valid is the same as that upon which Jesus insists, inasmuch as both, it would seem, rest back on human truth. What cannot achieve the approval of Jesus is unsound and therefore inferior, and this in spite of splendor of style, just as no brilliance of color can atone in a picture for fundamental falseness in drawing.

Friedrich Nietzsche and Voltaire, the dazzling German and the equally dazzling Frenchman, are examples of writers who have wielded wide influence

and who have supposedly been antagonistic to Jesus. Nietzsche in particular drove, as he believed, at the very foundations beneath Jesus' feet, vigorously, some would say tempestuously, denying that anything but bane lay in him. It is always easier to get rid of a great figure if one will not tarry to understand him. Probably Nietzsche himself has suffered from the same hasty appraisals that caused him to dismiss Jesus. A fairer treatment of both might lead one to detect sympathies between them that at least Nietzsche never suspected. The German's contempt of the Galilean's "humility," "love," "slave morality," "sentimentality over the weak," might have been nearer justification had the humility, love, morality, and sentimentality been the Galilean's. The ethics of Jesus had more toughness and spirit in them than Nietzsche ever glimpsed, and his dream for mankind was certainly more bracing than Nietzsche realized. Nietzsche's "will to power," his frank apotheosis of arbitrary dominance by the aristocratic few, is not Jesus' way, but it is just here that this critic of Jesus is most impermanent.

"Nietzsche," writes Stanley Hall, "has already been surpassed so that his views of the overman seem antiquated and clumsy." He would have made of the world a jungle ruled by a group of gloriously developed tigers. "Oh, it is excellent to have a giant's strength," he might have cried with Shakespeare—and with Jesus—but he must have left those two to finish it alone: "but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant." "Christianity has waged a deadly war against

the highest type of man. It is called the religion of sympathy, but sympathy stands in direct antithesis to the tonic passions, which elevate the energy of human beings. Sympathy in general quite thwarts the law of development, which is the law of selection. It preserves what is ripe for extinction. It is the multiplier and conservator of misery" (*The Will to Power*, Part I, "The Anti-Christ," p. 265). In such derision he is already a past thunderstorm, at the vigor of which we paused to marvel an hour ago.

It is not Christianity that is the critic of such an ideal, it is something deeper in us than that. Or perhaps it is closer to the truth to say that the deeper thing in us is Christianity. Christianity, surely Nietzsche forgot, could have had no power over us at all if there had not already been in us that which was ready to testify to its message as being true to the highest fashion of our being. "We cannot refute a disease," cries Nietzsche of Christianity. "Neither can one prove health," one may add. It may, however, be doubted if the ideal type, as drawn by Nietzsche, will be indorsed by the majority of either pre-Christian or post-Christian thinkers as being according to health.

Yet Nietzsche is not wholly past. The contribution that remains is that in him which—let him not turn over in his grave!—rings true to the note of Jesus. It would have been a great day, could Jesus and Nietzsche have sat down together to talk—with Plato called in to make notes and report! For Jesus, one cannot help thinking, would have liked the vital

German. He would have liked his impatience of cant and sham, his searching of motives, his exposure of flabbiness in "kindness," his glory in strong men. Yes, Jesus would have responded to his joy in the "aristocracy." Wherein Nietzsche "conceived of man as something that man must surpass," Jesus would have recognized his own Gospel—"Power to become." Encouragement of human weakness, conservation of wreckage by misplaced tenderness and sympathy! Not at all, Nietzsche! On the contrary. Criticism of human weakness, the more searching because of faith that it is not necessary, summons to resurrection, to emergence, power, abundant life. Jesus outdoes even your audacity, Nietzsche, for he would make not a section but the whole of life an aristocracy.

And perhaps Nietzsche would have liked the mighty Galilean, sitting there relieved of the company of us provoking disciples. He might have felt less cause for huge and angry truculence, and perhaps he might even have come to suspect that some deep explanation of his vehemence had been found as his discerning companion's cool fingers fell soft but firm upon hidden things in his life's history, wounds, old sores and disappointments that had never healed. Nietzsche might have sensed the truth that power itself is of different kinds, and that some kinds are higher; that here was one who seemed to represent, not the power of the past age, but of the new, not the force of brute dinosaurs, but of God, a power strangely able to move through a man's

dead earth with a pulse of spring. And, if by some clairvoyant vision, Nietzsche could have beheld Jesus die, he might even have loved him, remembering his own noble word: "Thus spake Zarathustra: 'I love him who willeth the creation of something beyond himself, and then perisheth.'"

Wherein Nietzsche really ran counter to Jesus he lost immortality. He may have been piquant, he was not nourishing; he supplied salt, but not meat. Nevertheless, beneath the surface we find him often not far from the kingdom of God. There lies his chief value to us all.

But to say this is to affirm again: *Vicisti Galilæa*.

Voltaire's rage was different. "The superstition of almost all nations," he wrote, "has been so horrible that, did not the monuments of it survive, it would be impossible to believe the accounts of it. The history of the world is the history of fanaticism." His fierce rebellion will not be understood except against the dark background of his age. It was a rebellion that did not discriminate enough, that was sufficiently terrible to bring down upon it the malignity and misrepresentation of the church, but it was a rebellion that had its reasons. As a fellow countryman of his has written, after describing the corrupt, privilege-ridden, priest-ridden times: "Then, O Voltaire, thou didst utter a cry of horror, and it will be thine eternal glory!"

His methods were not those of Jesus, but there were points where their spirits touched and where their aims were one. As with Nietzsche, the places

where he was in conflict with Jesus were his weakest places, those wherein he was akin have made him a guide of mankind and a savior. Realizing that the strength of barbarism lay in the docility of the people and in the superstition of the clergy, from his retreat on the Swiss frontier he hurled his famous battle cry across Europe: "*Ecrasez l'infame!*"—"Crush the infamous thing!" But his awful force lay less in his lightnings than in his laughter. "Cervantes smiled Spain's chivalry away"—not a particularly good thing to do except in so far as chivalry had become synonymous with ridiculous artificiality. Victor Hugo enlarges on the smile of Voltaire: "Toward the strong it is mockery, toward the weak it is a caress. It disquiets the oppressor and reassures the oppressed. Against the greatest, raillery; for the little it is pity. That smile, I repeat, is Voltaire." "The patriarch of levity," Hazlitt calls him, just as he names Rousseau "the father of sentiment." He "annihilated with laughter," declared Brandes, the Dane.

This man of the witty, mocking, sarcastic, merciless pen, with all his genius, could never have endured in any part unto this day had not his genius been put to the service of truth in the interests of men. He had this to his credit that he could be moved by a vast pity. And if he made his blows heavy it was because he knew them to be blows upon chains. "When he was born," Victor Hugo says in his grand fashion, "Louis XIV still reigned. When he died, Louis XVI already wore the crown; so that his cradle saw the last rays of the great throne and his

coffin the first gleams of the great abyss. . . . There are good abysses. Such are the abysses in which evil is engulfed." It was his more than any other single influence that so shook the foundations of deep-established despotisms that at length they collapsed into the French Revolution. No wonder he was hated and feared, hated and feared as were the disciples of a greater than Voltaire, who many centuries before had gone out bent on turning the world upside down.

"Voltaire's aim," observes Joseph McCabe, "was a sincere effort to rid pure religion of its morbid and abominable overgrowths." It will not be claimed that he did not err grievously again and again both in judgment and in temper, but there is a Voltaire that lives on because he deserves to. His faults are not the sinews of his strength, but his excellent purpose, his "moral rage," his revolt against unreality are. The Voltaire who could say: "Jesus, my brethren, was not superstitious nor intolerant. He said not a single word against the cult of the Romans, who surrounded his country. Let us imitate his indulgence and deserve to experience it from others"; the Voltaire who could say: "My brethren, religion is the secret voice of God speaking to men"—that Voltaire is the one who compensated for the Voltaire who too often was less than himself. The world gathers up and hoards the lasting values that came through him, but, and this is notable, those values are such as are harmonious with Jesus. Voltaire in certain of his moods will almost forfeit our respect, but we

are satisfied when, an old man of eighty-three, he says: "I die adoring God, loving my friends, not hating my enemies, and detesting superstition."

How is it that whatever falls foul of the spirit and purpose of Jesus cannot redeem from destruction even the most talented of men? All must yield up to him the fruits of their labor and of their thought, and he separates one thing from another as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats. To be approved of Christ: has this, then, come to be the assurance of immortality, and his disapproval the sentence of decay? Literature and teachers alike may indeed with equanimity, and even with indifference, allow the rest of us to pass by with our compliments or our censures; but the verdict of Jesus, in whose-soever name or whatsoever guise it may come, is apprehensively awaited, for there lieth fate. Mount Chimborazo, towering above the Andes, could not be satisfied until Agassiz, the great appraiser, had seen and approved: "Yes, I'm tall!" says Chimborazo. *"But I wait for him to say so."*

VIII. "THE GLITTERANCE OF CHRIST"

So we leave the theme. But of literature's rich and varied testimony to this dominant Figure what shall we more say? "Christ being holiest among the mighty and mightiest among the holy," cries Richter, "lifted with his pierced hands empires off their hinges, turned the stream of the centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages." Only two

things were able to overwhelm and strike dumb the eloquence and imagery of Dante. One was the vision of God. The other was the vision of Christ.

And he that takes his cross and follows Christ
Will pardon me for what I leave unsaid,
When in the fleckered dawning he shall spy
The glitterance of Christ.

Men of this caliber are not given to eulogizing for the mere joy of using words. Their steady eyes have seen something. It may be that what they have seen bewilders such as have not shared their vision, and their enthusiasm may in certain quarters appear inexplicable. But when men of genius bear testimony to genius the rest of us, wherein we fail to see what they see, might do well to suspect imperfect insight in ourselves. Was F. W. H. Myers only sentimentalizing?

Yea, through life, death, through sorrow and through sin-
ning,

He shall suffice me for he hath sufficed:

Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,

Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

—*Collected Poems*, The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Scholarly Tholuck goes to his new and difficult task at the German university, where men's souls had been frozen well nigh dead with anti-Christian rationalism. As he goes he confesses his heart: "*I have but one passion: it is He! it is He!*" One has not to be informed that Tholuck had vast reflective power, and that he had given the person and message of

Jesus considerable attention. Such a confession could not come from less. Great souls of many creeds and points of view have found it impossible to gaze steadily and at the same time unaffected upon the "great, grave Face" of Him who sits forever upon Olivet speaking, as never man spake, words that send a thousand echoes flying in all our human breast. His force, his wisdom, his beauty represent the haunting dream of man. It was not John the Baptist's testimony, but rather Myers' own, and that of a vast multitude which no man shall number, which was written many thousands of years later, and given to John to speak:

I have seen,
I have known him; I go hence, and all alone,
I carry Jesus with me till I die.

—*Ibid.*

Allusions, I

MAX EYTH recounts in his story "Berufs-Tragik" (in the collection, *Hinter Pflug und Schraubstock*) the building of the mighty bridge over the estuary of the Ennobucht. The most profound and thorough labour of the intellect, the most assiduous and devoted professional toil, had gone to the construction of the great edifice, making it in all its significance and purposefulness a marvel of human achievement. In spite of endless difficulties and gigantic obstacles, the bridge is at length finished, and stands defying wind and waves. Then there comes a raging cyclone, and building and builder are swept into the deep. Utter meaninglessness seems to triumph over richest significance, blind "destiny" seems to stride on its way over

prostrate virtue and merit. The narrator tells how he visits the scene of the tragedy and returns again.

"‘When we got to the end of the bridge, there was hardly a breath of wind; high above, the sky showed blue-green, and with an eerie brightness. Behind us, like a great open grave, lay the Ennobucht. The Lord of life and death hovered over the waters in silent majesty. We felt His presence, as one feels one’s own hand. And the old man and I knelt down before the open grave and before Him.’

"‘Why did they kneel? Why did they feel constrained to do so? One does not kneel before a cyclone or the blind forces of nature, nor even before Omnipotence merely as such. But one does kneel before the wholly uncomprehended Mystery, revealed yet unrevealed, and one’s soul is stilled by feeling the way of its working, and therein its justification.’—*The Idea of the Holy*, by RUDOLF OTTO. New York, Oxford University Press.

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